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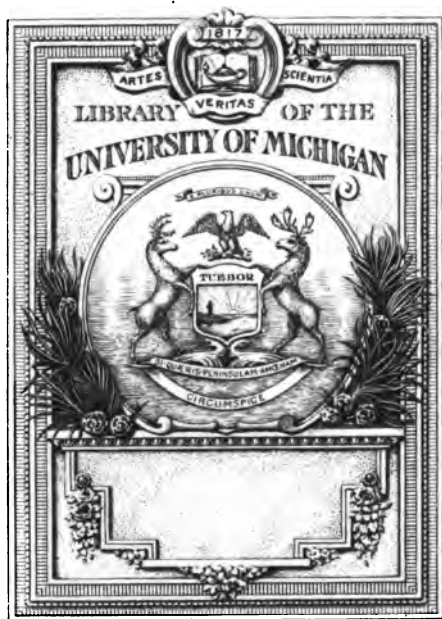
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STANDARD PLAYS FOR AMATEUR PERFORMANCE.

SCENES FROM
THE GREAT NOVELISTS

ADAPTED AND ARRANGED FOR
AMATEUR PERFORMANCE

BY
ELSIE FOGERTY.

COSTUME PLATES BY ISABEL BONUS.

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INTRODUCTION.

THESE scenes are intended for representation where a long play is not possible. They can form part of a Concert Programme and can be given without scenery, or they can be performed as a connected series with some of the delightful scenes from Jane Austen, Cranford, and "Nicholas Nickleby," which have been arranged by different authors.

All need costumes to bring out the sense of the period represented.

It is most important that this should also be thoroughly brought out in the bearing and gesture of the actors.

All details of walk and action must be carefully studied.

Historical pictures are the best means of acquiring this sense of style and variety in acting, and the effort to observe and express it will be found to possess real educational value.

In no case should the scenes be acted without a complete study of the characters in the works from which the scenes are taken.

There is a great deal of "business" required in each scene, and this involves very exact and careful rehearsal. Once an action is determined it must be precisely repeated without variation at every rehearsal.

Where lines are given to more than one speaker, and where "All" speak together the words must be

broken up, divided and repeated, so as to avoid stiff unison utterances. Sometimes, for instance, in the scene from the "Christmas Carol," the effect of general bustle and laughter is required; then varied and definite sentences must be given to each performer. For noise and laughter *outside* the scene the rapid repetition of some ridiculous phrase at different rates of speed is useful. The most self-conscious of amateurs will be moved to quite spontaneous laughter by the spectacle of a number of earnest persons repeating "raspberry tarts and spinach" in a crescendo of eagerness.

All bustling and noisy entrances must be begun quite softly, at a safe distance outside the scene, and in all bustling scenes neatness and most exact attention to cues is of the first importance.

A scene which is to produce the effect of confusion must be the scene in which the performers themselves are least confused.

It is unnecessary to repeat the general advice as to "casting" and rehearsal given in other volumes of this series.

In a series of detached scenes it is of the utmost importance to characterise the different parts broadly and quickly. There is no opportunity of gradually producing effect.

In the scene from Sir Walter Scott the characters are treated with a certain conventional picturesqueness. The contrast of Mary's words and the sharp opposition of Lady Lochleven to the other characters must be well emphasised. The different actors must be careful to oppose speed and manner of speaking in scenes where two characters are in opposition, the one to the other.

The loyalty of her attendants to Mary must be well brought out.

In the scenes from George Eliot the wonderfully natural picture of contemporary manners is the most important point. We see Mrs. Glegg determined to pick a quarrel with someone. Mrs. Pullet genteel and sentimental. Poor Mrs. Tulliver with the weight of her position as "poor relation" heavy upon her. The unfortunate children treated as rather superfluous articles of furniture. Mrs. Poyser nervous, overstrained, in poor physical health, and with a sense of wasted power, which is constantly in conflict with her "crisen duty." The smooth glibness of the old squire, with every syllable precise, chiselled, and agreeable, no matter how venomous his intention, contrasting with the slow shrewdness of Mr. Poyser, whose pride in his wife must no be forgotten.

In the Crachits' dinner the need for action is greatest. Little need be said of types of characters which have become familiar as household words.

It is, however, important to remember, that Tim must be absolutely unconscious of his own pathos and the merriest of all the children. Belinda has a touch of vanity which contrasts with the cheerful stoicism of the rest of the family.

PROGRAMME.

The five scenes given in this book with short musical interludes would occupy nearly two hours in performance.

An effective programme could be made with the two George Eliot scenes, a scene from Jane Austen and one from Cranford—say the immortal "Tea party"—under some such title as

"Women of the last Century."

Or a series of scenes from Dickens, such as the delightful version of "Nicholas Nickleby," called "The Gentleman in the next house," might conclude with the "Christmas Carol."

SCENE FROM "THE ABBOT."

THE DRESSES.

QUEEN MARY.—Overdress of black velveteen, over white satin, the yoke embroidered with silver thread and pearls. White muslin ruff, pleated in close box pleats, caught at the edge with pearls; chain of rough mother-of-pearl, shells and silver; white muslin puffed sleeves to elbow; white satin underskirt. If preferred the dress may be caught up with a pearl girdle. Long white veil of silk gauze, very silvery in texture; small black velvet cap, lined with white, and edged with large pearls.

It is generally easy to hire a good Mary Stuart dress, as the character is a very favourite one.

Mary was of pale complexion with auburn hair, and eyes of greenish hazel, very red lips, and a long graceful throat.

ROLAND GRAEME.—Black velveteen doublet slashed with vivid scarlet. White ruff at wrists and neck. Black sateen hose, slashed with scarlet. Scarlet silk stockings; black velvet shoes. Scarlet cloak. Black belt with steel buckle in which is worn a little steel poniard. Black velvet flat cap with scarlet feather.

CATHERINE SEYTON.—White underdress, with long pale blue girdle. Overdress figured with pale blue and

gold, black or very dark blue velvet strapping. White ruff at neck and wrists. Cap of gold thread and pearls, shaped to head, and tied at the back with little knots of pale blue ribbon catching the hair into short loops and curls.

MARY FLEMING.—Grey dress made with close fitting bodice, finished round the hips with a roll of amethyst velvet, from which the skirt hangs in straight folds, rather shorter at the back than in front. A chemisette of starched white muslin, with a high collar turned back a little, and open at the throat, held by a thin silver chain. The open square of the neck and the sleeves under the shoulder pieces marked with broad bands of amethyst velvet, white wrist bands, trimming of silver lace on front of bodice and round skirt. Cap of amethyst velvet edged with silver lace over white. Hair a little grey, very carefully waved and dressed. She carries a soft linen towel and a little silver basin.

LADY LOCHLEVEN.—Dress of dark red sateen, made over a stiff buckram frame, and with a large farthingale of crimson velveteen round the hips. The front of the bodice is made long and pointed over a buckram frame, quite hiding the shape of the figure; white front edged with crimson, large puffed epaulettes slashed with white, and edged with crimson; the sleeves very stiff and full, slashed with white and edged with crimson, and with small knots of crimson ribbon.

Very high stiff white ruff, much harder and larger than that worn by Mary.

Cap of red made over a curved wire frame, edged with white and crimson.

Large seal ring. Cushion with bunch of keys.

LADY LOCHLEVEN'S PAGES.—Brown doublets, cloaks, and slashings of silver-grey; untrimmed caps. Stiff ruffs. Brown leather shoes and belts.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

Fireplace with large iron dogs.

Small table or stand.

Long oak table.

Large oak chair, cushion and footstool.

Smaller oak chair.

Three square stools, one broken.

One or two large screens, covered with tapestry.

Flask of oil on table.

HAND PROPERTIES.

ROLAND.—Two large bunches of keys, a cushion, small poniard, sword, napkin.

MARY FLEMING.—Silver bowl, towel.

CATHERINE SEYTON.—Pewter, cups, and flagon ; small lamp.

PAGE.—Raised pie, plates, knives.

A tall shape of pastry like a game pie is the best form of dish to bring in. It may be filled with slices of fruit or sponge cake—anything easily eaten.

There are no forks. The Queen uses a knife and washes her fingers at every mouthful, very daintily in a little silver basin.

Lady Lochleven takes the portion carved for her by Roland, and wipes her fingers on a napkin he holds for her.

SCENE FROM "*THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*."

THE DRESSES.

Mrs. GLEGG.—Full black skirt and bodice, trimmed with straight lines of black braid and jet buttons ; a very ugly net kerchief, trimmed with bows of vivid

purple satin ribbon, very tossed and untidy; a dreadful turban-shaped cap of black net with a bunch of shabby artificial flowers dropping over one ear. Large cameo brooch, no white at throat and wrists, black thread mittens much too large fastened up with black elastic; flat slippers; a bunch of stiff light brown curls at each side of the face, a small coil of hair tightly screwed up behind; bands over forehead. The hair is supposed in each case to be covered by a "front." Mrs. Glegg's is fuzzy and untidy.

Mrs. PULLET.—A soft dove coloured tafetta dress, dainty white lace cap and collar. Large gold brooches and long drop earrings. Watch chain of thin gold several times looped round the neck, and having the key at one end inside dress; black velvet round neck and wrists, and little black velvet bows tying up a bunch of curls at each side of the face. If an old-fashioned front can be obtained it should have a brown silk foundation; if not the hair can be divided into a close knot behind and the two bunches of curls each side, and a brown ribbon tied closely across the head and under the back hair to give the same effect. All three sisters should have fair complexions, and light brown hair.

Mrs. TULLIVER.—Light brown dress with pipings of green. Straight bodice buttoning down the front. Lace collar and cap with lappets. Curls, small gold brooch, and silver watch chain. Much less smart than Mrs. Pullet, but tidy and dainty. She carries a shawl over her shoulders, which she keeps nervously pulling up.

All these dresses should date from just before the introduction of crinoline, and are quite without beauty of line or character. The heads being the one characteristic thing.

TOM.—Short tunic and knickers, with white drawers

showing below ; boots ; leather belt ; fair hair brushed very smoothly ; collar and wristbands.

MAGGIE.—Frock cut low round shoulders, and drawn in with a running string which slips off when she wriggles ; short sleeves, stiff uncomfortable looking white tucker. A great mass of rebellious dark hair, and pale skin.

Short lank skirt, white drawers showing almost to ankle, white socks, strap shoes.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

Large sofa covered in horse hair or repp, with crochet antimacassars.

Arm chair.

Small upright cupboard, holding medicine bottles, water tumblers, &c., with one locked drawer for key.

Large press to hold bonnet in box.

Two uncomfortable stools for the children.

Little table with old-fashioned workbox on it to hold third key.

HAND PROPERTIES.

Mrs. TULLIVER.—Pocket under skirt to hold handkerchief, two long Turkish towels, an old mat.

Mrs. PULLET.—Key worn on long chain round neck, key in drawers of cupboard, key in workbox. Pocket under skirt to hold handkerchief, large satin bonnet in grey and pink, bonnet box and a large quantity of fresh tissue paper, small medicine glass, bottle of drops, large bottle of effervescing mixture, tumbler and bottle of water, spoon.

Mrs. GLEGG.—Small bead reticule.

SCENE FROM "ADAM BEDE."

THE DRESSES.

Mrs. POYSER.—Gown of lilac print, made into a full band at the waist; white cotton cap cross-over and sleeve bands. Apron of fancy cotton, lilac and white; coarse ironing apron. Large stocking, half knitted. Ironing board, &c., and pile of washing to iron. She is a thin delicate woman with reddish hair.

POYSER.—Unbleached cotton or holland smock. Gaiters, very heavy boots, straw hat. Very red face, short tow coloured wig.

SQUIRE.—Long riding coat or riding cloak in dark cloth; square crowned white beaver riding hat, breeches and boots. White stock and frilled shirt. Dark cloth waistcoat. Riding gloves and hunting crop. Large handkerchief of fine unstarched cambric.

Clean shaven; iron grey hair; face lined and wrinkled like a little dried apple.

DAIRY MAIDS.—Fresh gowns of pink and white print, little close caps without the stiffness of Mrs. Poyser's. Distaff and spinning wheel, large china dish for holding milk.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

Spinning wheel and distaff.

Two spinning stools.

Large arm chair with cushion.

Three hard kitchen chairs, one with arms.

Dresser, with ordered blue china.

Clock.

Ironing board and blanket.

Pile of table cloths.
 Iron and bowl of starch.
 Large kitchen table and cloth.

HAND PROPERTIES.

DAIRY MAID.—Large china milk dish.
 Mrs. POYSER.—Half-knitted stocking, ironing apron.
 POYSER.—Straw hat.
 SQUIRE.—Hat, gloves, hunting crop, pocket handkerchief.

SCENE FROM THE "CHRISTMAS CAROL."

THE DRESSES.

The general effect of the dresses may be obtained from an illustrated Dickens of the period. They should, however, be as nondescript and poor as possible, though thoroughly neat and tidy.

Mrs. CRATCHIT.—Dark stuff dress and white apron, white turnover collar, no cuffs, a bunch of cherry coloured ribbons at the throat and elbows. A small cotton cap with a cherry coloured rosette.

BELINDA in a dress of the same shape but shorter, and with bows of the same ribbon, and rosettes on her hair, which is plaited into very many strands and looped over each ear. No cap, a cherry coloured ribbon round her waist, and bows on the pockets of her apron.

BOB.—A tight long coat reaching to the knees, with a tight waist and rather full skirts, buttoned right up to the throat and single breasted.

A very long woollen comforter of violet and white wool wound round and round his throat, and hanging

down below the waist in front. Tight gaiter-like trousers strapped down over the shoes. White socks just showing, very small white wristbands, no collar. Cap with small peak. Very thin and wretched looking.

TINY TIM.—Little holland smock with white knickers reaching to the ankle, showing underneath. Nankeen jacket, leather belt, wool mittens. One shoe with a high heel one without a heel. One shoulder padded much higher than the other. Cap, comforter, wooden crutch.

PETER.—Short jacket, very large frayed white collar, tied with a scarlet comforter. Scarlet wool cuffs, knickers, white socks, shoes without straps or buckles.

MARTHA.—Very neat dark dress; with one little bunch of ribbon at the throat, white collar and cuffs. Hair brushed smoothly, and dressed with a large comb behind; little cape to match dress, tiny black bonnet, with perfectly plain ribbon strings and no trimming, little white frill under crown; cotton gloves.

DICK.—Tunic with leather belt reaching to knee, short dark knickers to knee, and long white knickers to ankle, showing under; cap; hair cut to neck. Pale blue comforter.

JENNY.—Short skirt, rather stiff; white knickers to ankle under it; elbow sleeves rather loose; bright green ribbons tied at elbows, throat, and waist; white socks and strap shoes.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

Two screens made with tall towel horses to cover door back R.V.E., and a corner of room down L., where Martha hides. Rough dresser with a few odd plates, dishes, and cups, a paper of sugar, small tray holding jug, lemons, and square black bottle.

If possible fireplace R., with two small saucepans and a large one. Near it a small table stands against wall R., and in front of that a square box covered with red.

Seven chairs and a small three-legged stool.

Large round table R. C.

White table cloth on it folded up.

HAND PROPERTIES.

PETER.—Saucepan, large wooden spoon, dish for vegetables, potatoes, a little boiled rice, goose on dish with cover.

Mrs. CRACHIT.—Large tray with knives, forks, spoons, salt, bread, jug of water, large knife for bread and goose, cup for gravy, spoon, large dish, and small plum-pudding, lighted with brandy before coming in; small saucepan.

BELINDA.—Cup of apple sauce, spoons, sprigs of holly, sugar in a paper, plates for pudding.

See that tray with jug, lemons, square bottle, tumblers and cups are all ready on dresser before scene opens.

DICK.—Paper roll for trumpet.

JENNY.—Red paper flag, chesnuts on a large iron shovel.

TIM.—Cap, comforter, crutch.

MARTHA.—Bag of oranges, plates for goose.

BOB.—Comforter, jug, lemons, spoon, &c., for punch.

The best way of representing the food in this scene is to have the goose represented by a shaped sponge cake covered with brown chocolate or caramel sauce.

The plum pudding may be a real one, very small, or may be made in the same way.

The potatoes at the beginning must be real ones in their brown skins, but a little boiled rice may be used in the end of the scene.

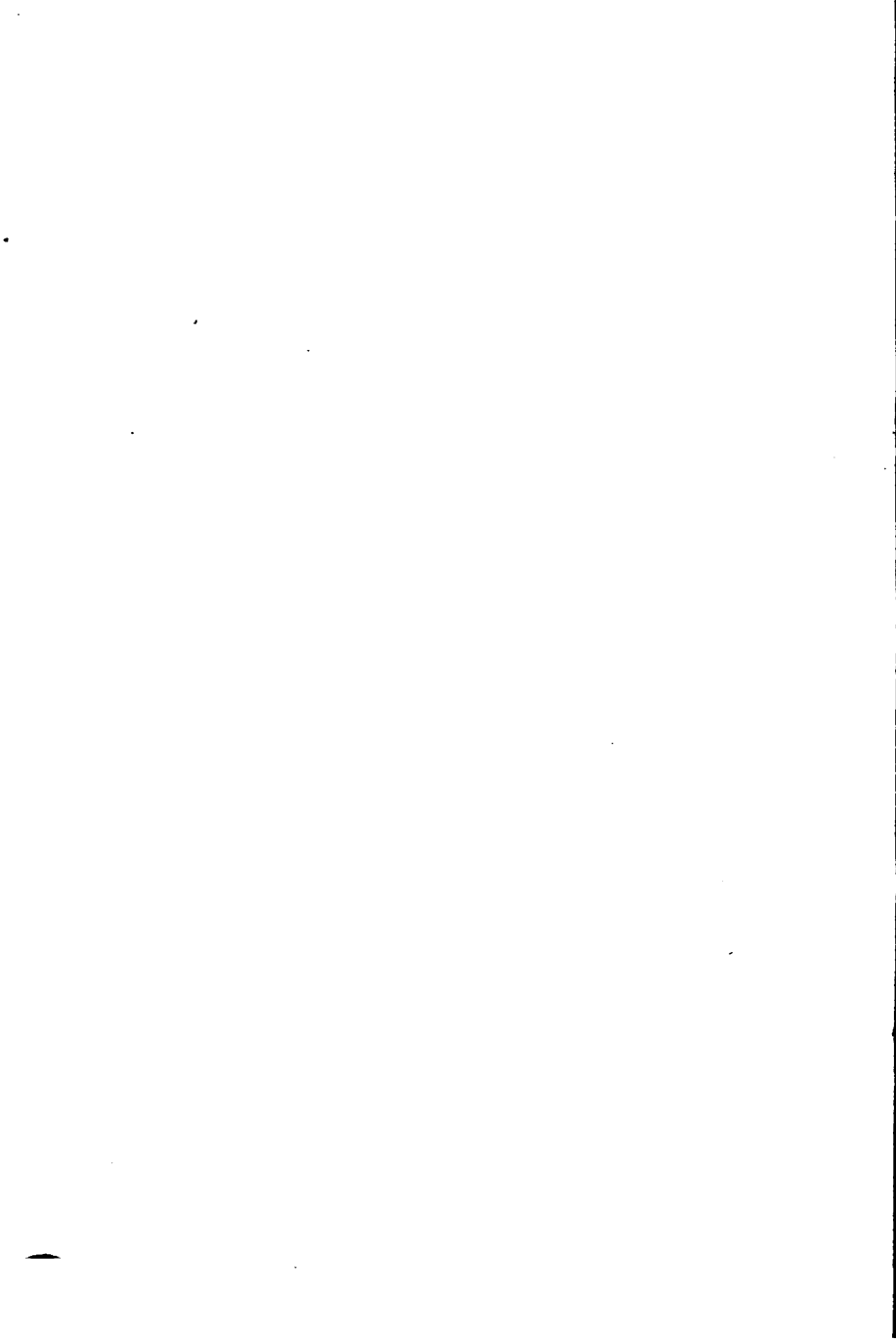
Lemonade for the punch, which Bob should really make.

Stage firelight is represented by lime light, but if this is not easy to obtain an ordinary oil stove may be arranged in the kitchen fireplace so that a certain glow will shine through.

The pudding fire is quite safe and burns out quickly, but a damp cloth may be kept under the table to extinguish it more quickly in case of need.

If the green draped stage is used the fireplace must be supposed to be in the next room, and the gravy, &c., brought in from there. Peter bringing in the potatoes after Mrs. Crachit's entrance.

It would then be safer to leave out the lighting of the pudding and the lines referring to it.



SCENE FROM "THE ABBOT."

The Changing of the Keys.

CHARACTERS.

ROLAND GRÆME, Mary's Page.

LADY CATHERINE SEYTON } Mary's Attendants.
LADY MARY FLEMING }

DAME MARGARET DOUGLAS, *the Lady of Lochleven*,
Mary's Jailer.

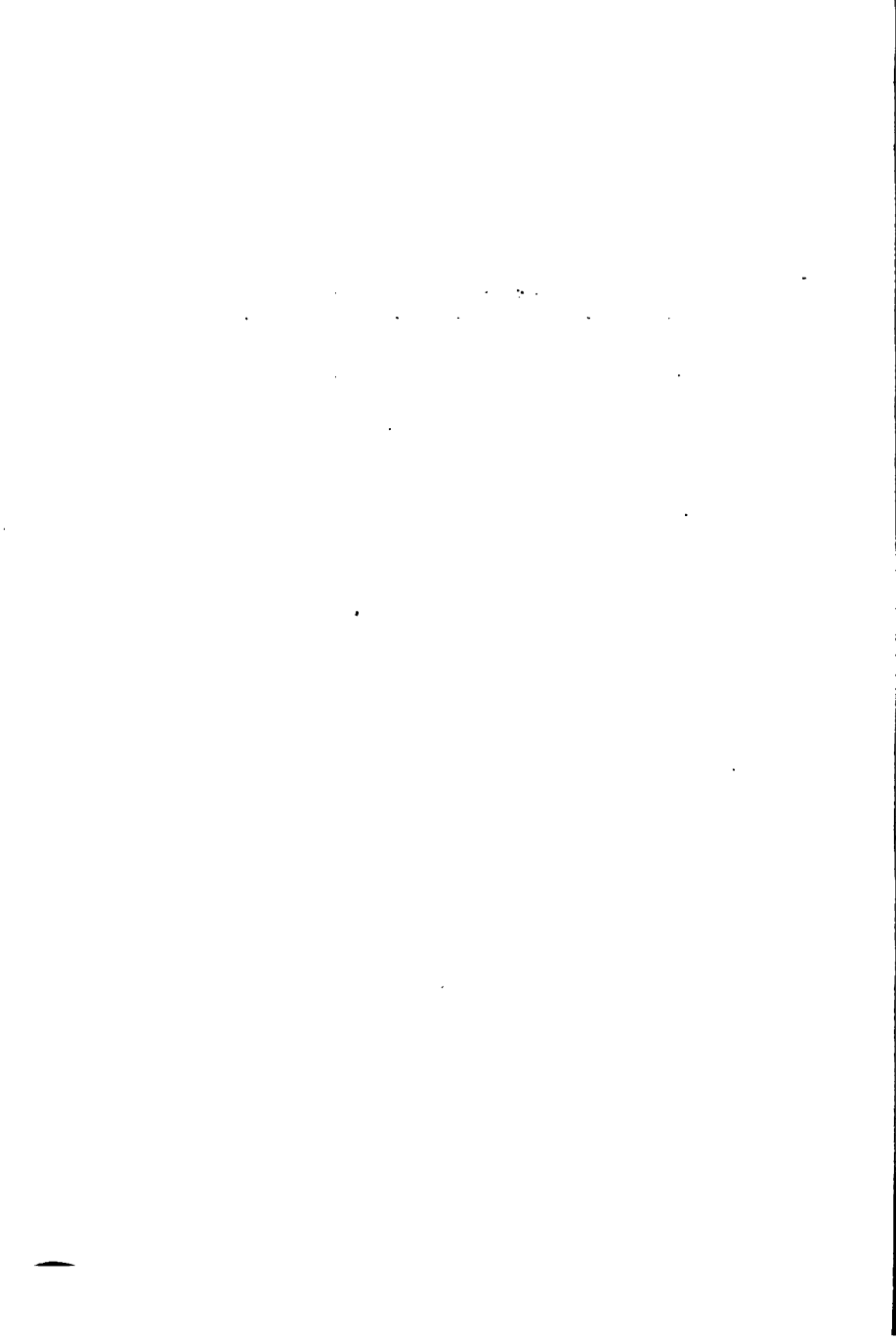
TWO PAGES, attending on Lady Lochleven.

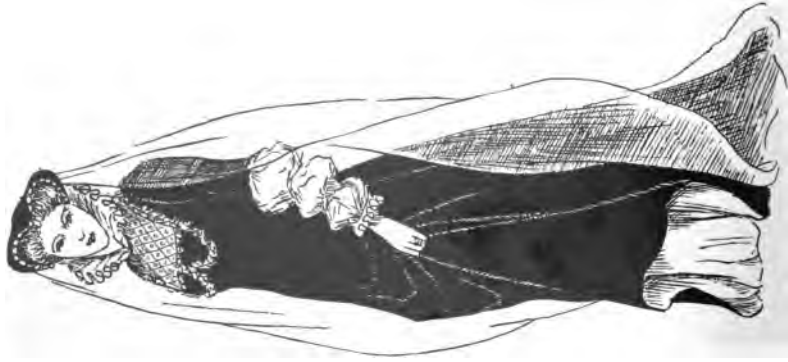
MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

SCENE.—A room in the Castle of the Douglas, on
an island in Loch Leven, during Queen Mary's
captivity.

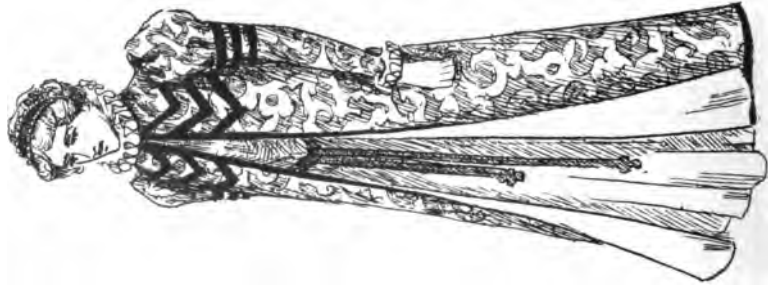
SCENE I.—The morning after Mary's first fruitless
attempt to escape.

SCENE II.—Some days later, the evening of her
second, successful attempt.

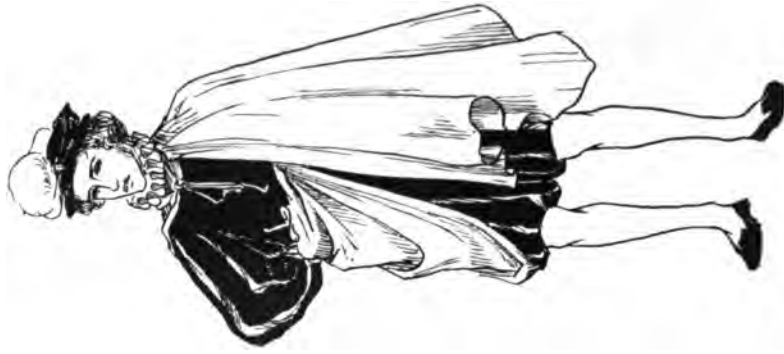




QUEEN MARY.



CATHERINE SEYTON.



ROLAND GRAEME.

SCENE I.

MARY'S room. Oriel window R. in back of stage.

Large Table C., with carved oak chair L. of table. Fireplace R., four stools. Door back C. and L. covered by tapestry screens forming irregular recesses. As the curtain rises ROLAND is arranging cushion and footstool at the Queen's chair L.C., he steps back to see if it is right, then looks back at door C.

Roland. Poor ladies. I am now their only champion ; and, come weal, come woe, I will be, to the best of my skill and power, as faithful, as trustworthy, as brave, as any Douglas of them all could have been. [Hand on his poniard.

Enter CATHERINE L.C.

Roland. The Queen, is she well ?

Eagerly.

CATHERINE advances weeping.

Catherine. Can you suppose it ? Think you her heart and body are framed of steel and iron, to endure the cruel disappointment of yester-even, and the infamous taunts of yonder puritanic hag ? Would to heaven that I were a man, to aid her more effectually !

Impatiently.

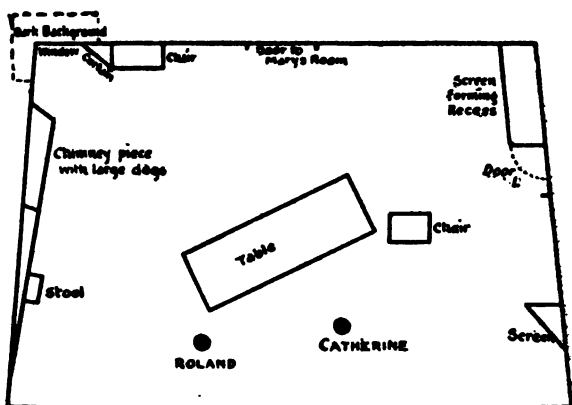
Roland. If those who carry pistols, and batons, and poniards, are not men, they are at least Amazons, and that is as formidable.

With meaning.

4 SCENES FROM THE GREAT NOVELISTS.

Turns away L.

Catherine. You are welcome to the flash of your wit, sir, I am neither in spirits to enjoy nor to reply to it.



Comes close to table.

Roland. Well, then, list to me in all serious truth. And, first, let me say, that the gear last night had been smoother had you taken me into your counsels.

Turning on him sharply.

Catherine. And so we meant; but who could have guessed that Master Page should choose to pass all night in the garden, like some moon-stricken knight in a Spanish romance—instead of being in his bedroom when Douglas came to hold communication with him on our project.

Folding arms.

Roland. And why defer to so late a moment so important a confidence?

Curtseys mockingly.

Catherine. Because your communications with Henderson, and—with pardon—the natural impetuosity and fickleness of your disposition, made us dread to entrust you with a secret of such consequence till the last moment.

Roland. And why at the last moment? why at that, or any other moment, since I had the misfortune to incur so much suspicion?

Catherine. Nay—now you are angry again, and to serve you aright I should break off this talk; but I will be magnanimous, and answer your question. Know, then, our reason for trusting you was twofold. In the first place, we could scarce avoid it, since you slept in the room through which we had to pass. In the second place——

Roland. Nay, you may dispense with a second reason, when the first makes your confidence in me a case of necessity.

Catherine. Good now, hold thy peace. In the second place, as I said before, there is one foolish person among us, who believes that Roland Græme's heart is warm, though his head is giddy—that his blood is pure, though it boils too hastily—and that his faith and honour are true as the load-star, though his tongue sometimes is far less than discreet.

Roland. And this single friend, this only one who would do justice to Roland Græme—Will you not tell me, dearest Catherine, to whom I owe my most grateful, my most heartfelt thanks?

Catherine. Nay, if your own heart tell you not——

Roland. Dearest Catherine!

Catherine. If your own heart, I say, tell you not, it is very ungrateful; for since the maternal kindness of the Lady Fleming——

Offended.

Wringing her hands impatiently.

Turning away R.

Holding his arm. More gently.

Passionately.

Laughing again.

After listening with growing eagerness comes close to her.

Turning away with feigned embarrassment.

Kneeling eagerly beside her and catching her hand.

Springs away, once more mocking him.

6 SCENES FROM THE GREAT NOVELISTS.

Stamping. He speaks angrily and grows louder as he goes on, while Catherine tries to hush him.

Roland. By heaven, Catherine, your tongue wears as many disguises as your person ! But you only mock me, cruel girl. You know the Lady Fleming has no more regard for any one, than hath the forlorn princess who is wrought into yonder piece of old figured court tapestry.

Catherine. It may be so, but you should not speak so loud.

*Contemptuously.
Sentimentally.*

Roland. Pshaw ! she cares for no one but herself and the Queen. And you know, besides, there is no one of you whose opinion I value, if I have not your own. No—not that of Queen Mary herself.

*Not at all impressed.
In a hurt tone.*

Catherine. The more shame for you, if it be so.

Roland. Nay, but, fair Catherine, why will you thus damp my ardour, when I am devoting myself, body and soul, to the cause of your mistress ?

Seriously.

Catherine. It is because in doing so, you debase a cause so noble, by naming along with it any lower or more selfish motive. Believe me, think vilely and falsely of women—I mean of those who deserve the name—who deem that they love the gratification of their vanity better than they love the virtue and honour of the man they may be brought to prefer.

More earnestly.

Roland listens gravely.

Roland. You hold a glorious prize for such toil.

*Leaning to him.
Drawing away*

Catherine. Only a heart which knows how to value it. He that should free this injured princess from these dungeons, and set her at liberty among her loyal and warlike nobles, whose hearts are burning to welcome her—where is the maiden in

Turns away L. by tables.

Scotland whom the love of such a hero would not honour.

Roland. I am determined to take the adventure. Tell me first, however, fair Catherine, and speak it as if you were confessing to the priest—this poor Queen, I know she is unhappy—but, Catherine, do you hold her innocent? She is accused of murder.

Catherine. Do I hold the lamb guilty, because it is assailed by the wolf? do I hold yonder sun polluted, because an earth-damp sullies his beams?

Roland. Would my conviction were as deep as thine! But one thing is clear, that in this captivity she hath wrong—She rendered herself up, on a capitulation, and the terms have been refused her—I will embrace her quarrel to the death!

[*Hand on poniard.*]

Catherine. Will you—will you, indeed? O, be but firm in mind, as thou art bold in deed and quick in resolution; after-ages shall honour thee as the saviour of Scotland!

Roland. But when I have toiled successfully to win that Leah, Honour, thou wilt not, my Catherine, condemn me to a new term of service for that Rachel, Love?

Catherine. Of that we shall have full time to speak; but Honour is the elder sister, and must be won the first.

Roland. I may not win her, but I will venture fairly for her, and man can do no more.

Catherine. Hush! the Queen.

MARY FLEMING enters C., turns and curtseys.

*Leaning on tables.
Lowering his voice
and speaking very
anxiously.*

*Indignantly.
Turning to Roland.*

*Moves away L.
Sighing.
Then more
resolutely.*

Springing to him.

*With meaning.
Taking her hand.*

*Drawing back
quickly.*

Defiantly.

Turning up stage.

8 SCENES FROM THE GREAT NOVELISTS.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS enters, pauses in door to look round, then sadly moves to chair.

Queen Mary. Alas ! Poor Douglas ! [Sits.

CATHERINE sets footstool, FLEMING arranges veil and cushion, ROLAND bows.

With exaggerated cheerfulness. Pointing to Roland.

Catherine. Yes, gracious madam, our gallant knight is indeed banished—the adventure was not reserved for him ; but he has left behind him a youthful esquire, as much devoted to your Grace's service, and who, by me, makes you tender of his hand and sword.

R. Steps forward and bows.

Roland. If they may in aught avail your Grace. [Bowing profoundly.

Seated, turns to Catherine.

Queen Mary. Alas ! what needs this, Catherine?—why prepare new victims to be involved in, and overwhelmed by, my cruel fortune ?—were we not better cease to struggle, and ourselves sink in the tide without further resistance, than thus drag into destruction with us every generous heart which makes an effort in our favour ?

[Hides her face weeping.

Takes Roland's hand.

Catherine. Speak not thus, madam, before your faithful servants, to discourage their zeal at once and to break their hearts. Come, Roland, and let us, the youngest of her followers, show ourselves worthy of her cause—let us kneel before her footstool, and implore her to be her own magnanimous self. [Both kneel before the Queen.

Bending to touch Catherine's hair. Looks round at Fleming L.

Queen Mary. Alas ! *ma mignonne*, that you should thus desperately mix with my unhappy fate the fortune of your young lives !—Are they not a lovely couple, my Fleming ? and is it not heartrending to think that I must be their ruin ?

Roland. Not so, it is we, gracious sovereign, who will be your deliverers.

Queen Mary. It is by the mouth of these children that Heaven calls me to resume the thoughts which become my birth. Thou knowest, my friend, whether to make those who have served me happy, was not ever Mary's favourite pastime. Well, I repent not of it—though Knox termed it sin, and Morton degradation. I was happy, because I saw happiness around me; and and woe betide the wretched jealousy that can extract guilt out of the overflowings of an unguarded gaiety!—Fleming, if we are restored to our throne, shall we not have one blithesome day at a blithesome bridal, of which we must now name neither the bride nor the bridegroom? but that bridegroom shall have the barony of Blairgowrie, a fair gift even for a queen to give, and that bride's chaplet shall be twined with the fairest pearls that ever were found in the depths of Lochlomond; and thou thyself, Mary Fleming, the best dresser of tresses that ever busked the tresses of a queen, and who would scorn to touch those of any woman of lower rank,—thou thyself shalt, for my love, twine them into the bride's tresses.—Look, my Fleming, suppose them such clustered locks as those of our Catherine, they would not put shame upon thy skill.

Fleming. Alas! madam, your thoughts stray far from home.

Queen Mary. They do my Fleming.

ROLAND and CATHERINE rise and slip back. *Pause.*

Queen Mary. But to other gear.

Still kneeling.

More brightly.

*To Fleming.
Defiantly.*

*Forgets all sadness
as she speaks.
Playfully.*

*Rolana watches
Catherine eagerly,
touching Catherine's
hair.*

Sadly.

*Holding her hand to
Fleming.*

Bowing.

Roland. How say you, girls?—here is a new difficulty—How are these keys to be come by?—there is no deceiving or bribing this dragon, I trow; and the Lady Lochleven never parts with them. May I crave to know whether, if your Grace were beyond the walls of the castle, you could find means of conveyance to the firm land, and protection when you are there?

Queen Mary. Trust us for that, Roland, for to that point our scheme is indifferent well laid.

Roland. And is your Grace well assured of the fidelity and watchfulness of those without?

Queen Mary. For their fidelity I will answer with my life, and for their vigilance I will answer with my life—I will give thee instant proof, my faithful Roland, that they are ingenuous and trusty as thyself. Come hither.

Rises and steps back behind table R.

Fleming goes to door L.

*In a whisper.
Catherine leans
across table.*

Make fast the door of the parlour, Fleming, and warn us if you hear the least step—or stay, go thou to the door, Catherine, thy ears and thy wits are both sharper.

ROLAND and MARY go up to window.

*Catherine goes L.,
takes lamp, gives it
to Fleming, and
takes her place at
door L.
Fleming crosses to
window with lamp.*

Look from that window, Roland, see you amongst the several lights which begin to kindle, and to glimmer palely through the grey of the evening from the village of Kinross—seest thou, I say, one solitary spark apart from the others, and nearer it seems to the verge of the water?—It is no brighter at this distance than the torch of the poor glow-worm, and yet, my good youth, that light is more dear to Mary Stuart than every star that twinkles in the blue vault of heaven.

By that signal. I know that more than one true heart is plotting my deliverance. Plan after plan has been formed and abandoned, but still the light glimmers; and while it glimmers, my hope lives.—O, how many evenings have I sat musing in despair over our ruined schemes, and scarce hoping that I should again see that blessed signal; when it has suddenly kindled, and brought hope and consolation, where there was only dejection and despair!

Roland. If I mistake not, the candle shines from the house of Blinkhoolie, the mail-gardener.

Queen Mary. Thou hast a good eye.

[Steps forward and signs to FLEMING to take her place.]

I will confide the whole to thee—I am about to ask those faithful friends, if the moment for the great attempt is nigh.—Place the lamp in the window, Fleming. Now count, for my heart beats so thick that I cannot count myself.

[Crosses to chair and stands leaning on it.]

Fleming. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ah!

[Turns to Queen.]

Queen Mary. Now, Our Lady be praised! it was but two nights since, that the absence of the light remained, while I could tell thirty. The hour of deliverance approaches.

ROLAND comes forward R.

Roland. Then, if your Grace will permit me to speak my mind, I think I could be of some use in this matter.

Queen Mary. As how, my good youth?—speak on, and fearlessly.

Shading his eyes and looking eagerly from window.

Patting his shoulder.

Roland stays at window.

At window with light, counts slowly. Roland starts back.

Sits. Catherine takes lamp and sets it on stand L.

With some importance.

Roland. My patron the Knight of Avenel used to compel the youth educated in his household to learn the use of axe and hammer.

FLEMING comes down by Queen, R.

Bowing to Catherine L.

I gained some practice in it, as the Lady Catherine Seyton partly knows; for since we were here I wrought her a silver brooch.

L. of Queen. Mockingly.

Catherine. Ay, but you should tell her Grace that your workmanship was so indifferent that it broke to pieces next day, and I flung it away.

Laughing. Looking from C. to Roland. Catherine shakes her head in denial.

Queen Mary. Believe her not, Roland, she wept when it was broken, and put the fragments into her bosom. But for your scheme—could your skill avail to forge a second set of keys?

Bowing.

Roland. No, madam, because I know not the wards. But I am convinced I could make a set so like that hateful bunch which the lady has now, that, could they be exchanged against them by any means, she would never dream she was possessed of the wrong.

Clasping her hands.

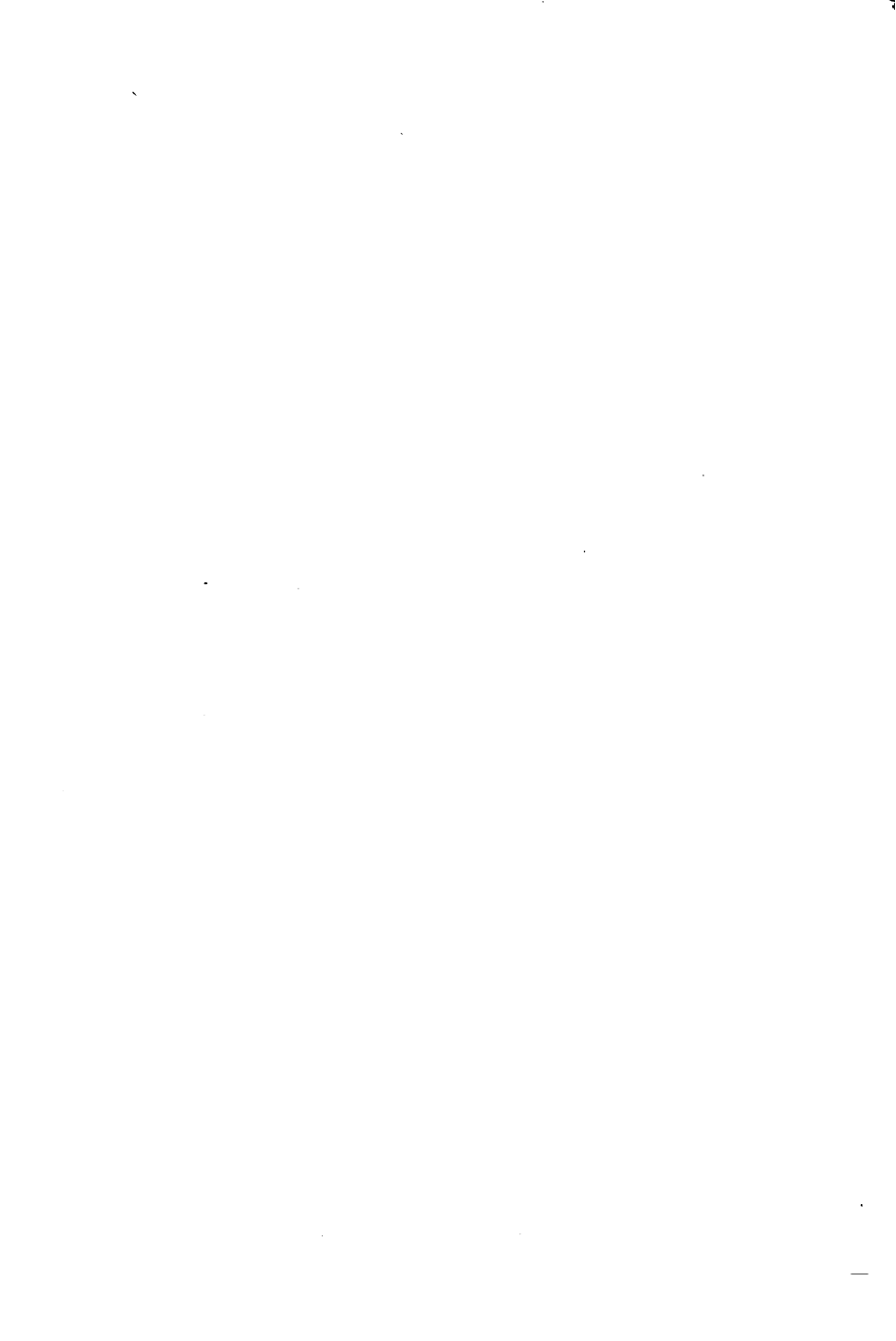
Queen Mary. And the good dame, thank Heaven, is somewhat blind, but then for a forge, my boy, and the means of labouring unobserved?

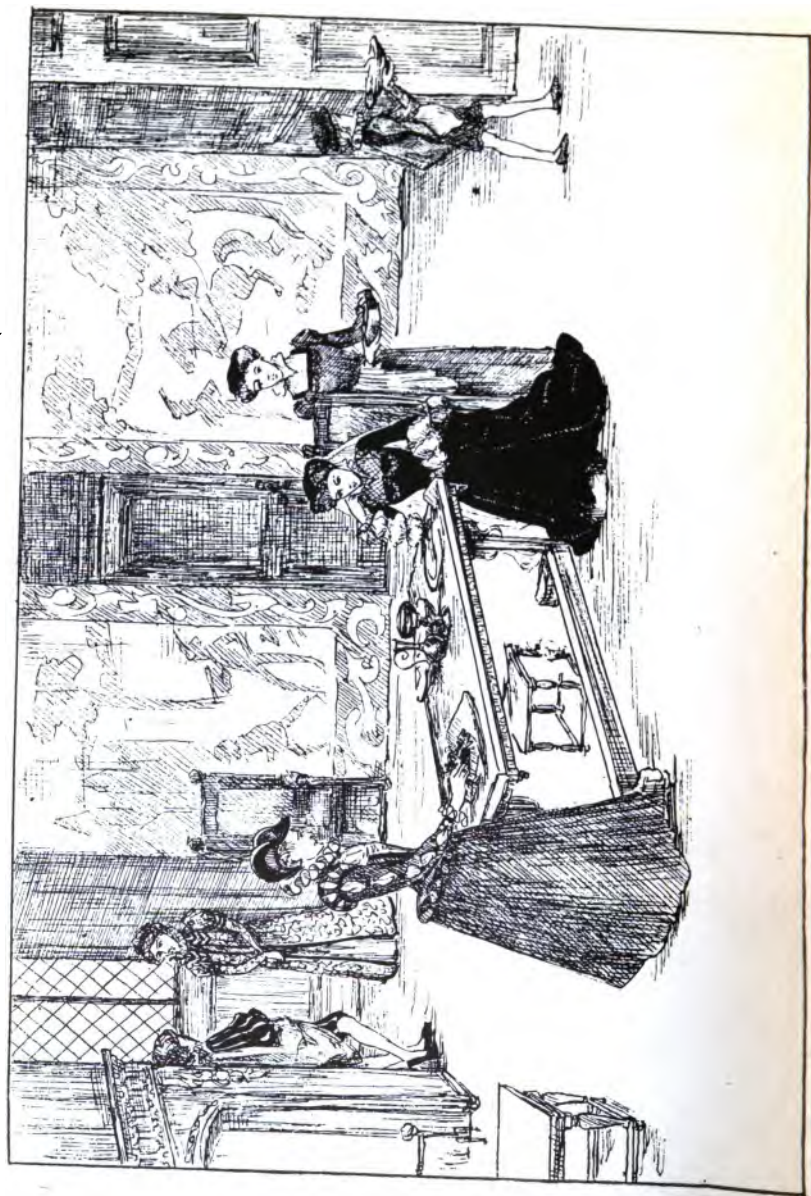
More eagerly. Catherine and Fleming sign their approval.

Roland. The armourer's forge, at which I used sometimes to work with him, is the round vault at the bottom of the turret—he was dismissed with the warder for being supposed too much attached to George Douglas. The people are accustomed to see me work there, and I warrant I shall find some excuse that will pass current with them for putting bellows and anvil to work.

Turning to Fleming.

Queen Mary. The scheme has a promising face;



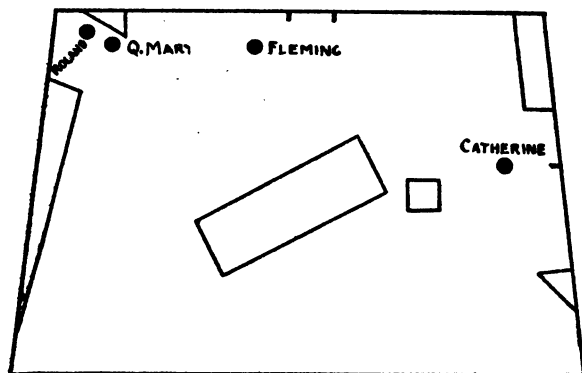


about it, my lad, with all speed, and beware the nature of your work is not discovered.

Roland. Nay, I will take the liberty to draw the bolt against chance visitors, so that I will have time to put away what I am working upon before I undo the door.

Catherine. Will not that of itself attract suspicion, in a place where it is so current already?

Leaning forward



Roland. Not a whit; Gregory the armourer, and every good hammerman, locks himself in when he is about some masterpiece of craft. Besides, something must be risked.

Confidently.

Queen Mary. Part we then to-night, and God bless you, my children!—If Mary's head ever rises above water, you shall all rise along with her.

*Rising.
Roland kneels R.*

MARY holds her hands to CATHERINE and ROLAND as curtain falls.

SCENE II.

Same scene but with plates, knives, &c., on tables, ROLAND leaning across table showing the keys to QUEEN MARY seated L. FLEMING and CATHERINE leaning over chair also examine keys.

Touching keys.

*All shake their heads.
Catherine steps back L.
Roland behind table.
Fleming behind
Queen's chair R.*

Lady Fleming shakes her head.

*Catherine signs in the negative.
Roland shakes head.*

Roland hand on sword.

Queen Mary. I allow, that the Lady Lochleven's eyes, which are not of the clearest, may be well deceived, could we pass those keys on her in place of the real implements of her tyranny. But how is this to be done, and which of my little court dare attempt this *tour de jongleur* with any chance of success? Could we but engage her in some earnest matter of argument—but those which I hold with her always have been of a kind which make her grasp her keys the faster, as if she said to herself—Here I hold what sets me above your taunts (*rises*) and reproaches—And even for her liberty, Mary Stuart could not stoop to speak the proud heretic fair.—What shall we do? (*Sits.*) Shall Lady Fleming try her eloquence in describing the last new head-tire from Paris?—alas! the good dame has not changed the fashion of her head-gear since Pinkie-field, for aught that I know. Shall my *mignon* Catherine sing to her one of those touching airs, which draw the very souls out of me and Roland Græme? Alas! Dame Margaret Douglas would rather hear a Huguenot psalm of Clement Marrot, sung to the tune of *Reveillez vous, belle endormie*.—Cousins and liege counsellors, what is to be done, for our wits are really astray in this matter?—Must our man-at-arms and the champion of our body,

Roland Græme, manfully assault the old lady, and take the keys from her *par voie du fait*?

Roland. Nay! with your Grace's permission, I do not doubt being able to manage the matter with more discretion; for though in your Grace's service, I do not fear——

Catherine. A host of old women, each armed with rock and spindle; yet he has no fancy for pikes and partisans, which might rise at the cry of *Help! a Douglas, a Douglas!*

Roland. They that do not fear fair ladies' tongues, need dread nothing else.—But, gracious liege, I am well-nigh satisfied that I could pass the exchange of these keys on the Lady Lochleven; but I dread the sentinel who is now planted nightly in the garden, which, by necessity, we must traverse.

Queen Mary. Our last advices from our friends on the shore have promised us assistance in that matter. To-night then make your trial (*takes FLEMING'S arm and goes up to door*), for something tells me we shall see two lights instead of one from the window. [Exit Mary.]

Catherine. They are bearing the dishes across the court, marshalled by the Lady Lochleven herself, dressed out in her highest and stiffest ruff, with her partlet and sleeves of cyprus, and her huge old-fashioned farthingale of crimson velvet.

Roland. I believe on my word, it was in that very farthingale that she captivated the heart of gentle King Jamie thirty years ago.

Leaning forward and interrupting.

After waiting carefully for Catherine to stop. Queen Mary laughs at Catherine.

Rising. Roland and Catherine bow. Fleming attends Mary to door, then returns to C.

At window, Roland beside her.

C. near table, in a lecturing tone. Roland and Catherine show signs of much boredom.

Fleming. That may hardly be, Master Roland, since the farthingales came first in when the Queen Regent went to Saint Andrews, after the battle of Pinkie, and were then called *Vertugardins*——

A jingle of keys is heard outside door L., it opens, two PAGES enter. LADY FLEMING stands by table. PAGES set food and wine on table, and a red cushion with keys. LADY LOCHLEVEN enters and crosses to foot of table, passing in front of it. A pause.

With slow formality.

Lady Lochleven. Please to inform the Lady Mary that I attend her commands.

With emphasis.

Fleming. Her Majesty shall be informed that the Lady Lochleven waits.

Pause while FLEMING fetches the Queen from C. Door.

Roland and Catherine bow. Pages go out L.

Queen Mary (entering C.) This is nobly done, Lady Lochleven, for though we ourselves apprehend no danger under your roof, our ladies have been much alarmed by this morning's chance, (*crosses and sits*) and our meal will be the more cheerful for your presence and assurance.

ROLAND comes to back of table, carves, and hands food to LADY LOCHLEVEN.

Immovably. Roland with napkin and plate goes R. end of table.

Lady Lochleven. I fear madam I shall prove but a poor guest at the board, having but little spirit for that vain mirth, which, blazing and vanishing like the crackling of dry thorns, leaves to the fools who love it nothing but dust and ashes.

MARY looks humorously at CATHERINE.

MARY FLEMING has fetched a small silver bowl and stands by QUEEN MARY, after each mouthful MARY dips her fingers in water and wipes them on towel which FLEMING holds across her arm. ROLAND, after LADY LOCHLEVEN has tasted food, helps the Queen; putting away first plate and knife on table with lamp L. Same business with wine. This goes on for some time and MARY grows more and more restless.

Queen Mary. We can commit no deadly sins here, *ma bonne*, where we are so well warded and looked to; but if we could, this Carthusian silence might be useful as a kind of penance. If thou hast adjusted my wimple amiss, my Fleming, or if Catherine hath made a wry stitch in her broidery, when she was thinking of something else than her work, or if Roland Græme hath missed a wild-duck on the wing, and broke a quarrel-pane of glass in the turret window, as chanced to him a week since, now is the time to think on your sins and to repent of them.

Lady Lochleven. Madam, I speak with all reverence, but I am old, and claim the privilege of age. Methinks your followers might find fitter subjects for repentance than the trifles you mention, and so mention—once more I crave your pardon—as if you jested with sin and repentance both.

Queen Mary. You have been our taster, Lady Lochleven, I perceive you would eke out your duty with that of our Father Confessor. How I must lament the smallness of our train which forces so many offices on our kind hostess, and

*Turning to Fleming.
Catherine has
remained R. behind
Lady L. near
window.
Each shakes head
as Mary speaks.*

*Formally.
Roland goes up to
window.
He and Catherine
look at keys and sign
to one another.*

*Catherine shakes her
head and signs
despairingly to
Roland.
Business of eating
and drinking
continues.*

*Clenches her hand
angrily.*

*Looking round and
affecting surprise.
Catherine and
Roland again sign
to one another in
comical despair.*

Sternly.

Sweetly.

*Suddenly calling
out.*

that these august apartments are so scantily furnished, that we have not been able to offer you even the relief of a stool during the long time you have afforded us the pleasure of your society.

Lady Lochleven. The will, madam, the will to offer such accommodation was more wanting than the means.

Queen Mary. What! there are then stools in this apartment—one, two—no less than four, including the broken one—a royal garniture!—We observed them not (*shivers ostentatiously*). My good Fleming I would that we had the chimney-grate supplied with a faggot or two of these same thorns which the Lady of Lochleven describes so well. Methinks the damp air from the lake, which stagnates in these vaulted rooms, renders them deadly cold.

Lady Lochleven. Your Grace's pleasure shall be obeyed, yet may I presume to remind you that we are now in summer?

Queen Mary. I thank you for the information, my good lady, for prisoners better learn their calendar from the mouth of their jailer, than from any change they themselves feel in the seasons.

ROLAND suddenly leans forward to window and signs to CATHERINE, she moves a little closer to LADY LOCHLEVEN.

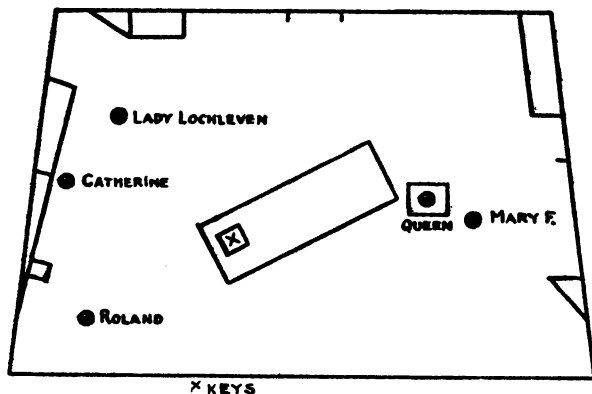
Roland. There are corpse candles in the church yard.

LADY LOCHLEVEN turns and goes sharply to window; ROLAND comes down crossing her; he has the false keys in his left hand, catches the

real ones sharply in right hand, and at the same moment puts the false bunch on the cushion, and stands with folded arms a little R. of table; a slight noise is inevitable in making the exchange.

Lady Lochleven. Who touches the keys!

Facing round.



Roland. The sleeve of my cloak brushed them as I passed.

Very quietly.

There is a moment's tense pause, during which LADY LOCHLEVEN looks suspiciously from one to another; MARY goes on absently eating as if nothing had occurred, CATHERINE watches her, ROLAND has the keys under his cloak held by his arm, and with both hands free is fastening the sleeve of his doublet. FLEMING stares rather consciously in front of her. LADY LOCHLEVEN steps swiftly to the table and snatches up the keys, then steps back up stage to window, without turning round.

Lady Lochleven. I hold these gleams to come, not from the churchyard, but from the hut of the old gardener Blinkhoolie. I wonder what thrift that churl drives, that of late he hath ever had light in his house till the night grew deep. I thought him an industrious, peaceful man—If he turns resetter of idle companions and night-walkers, the place must be rid of him.

Innocently.

Roland. He may work his baskets, perchance.

Catherine. Or nets, may he not ?

Roland. Ay, madam, for trout and salmon.

Lady Lochleven. Or for fools and knaves, but this shall be looked after to-morrow.—I wish your Grace and your company a good evening.

[*She comes down to table and lays the keys on the cushion and calls.*]

Randal attend us.

The two PAGES re-enter L., one takes the keys on cushion and waits beside LADY LOCHLEVEN, who does not move her hand from the keys. The other clears away, then LADY LOCHLEVEN signs to PAGE to precede her and goes out L. The door closes. MARY bows her head weeping. FLEMING turns away. ROLAND hurries to table and leans over to MARY.

Roland. For Heaven's sake, madam, droop not now,—sink not now !

[*CATHERINE bending over the Queen comforts her.*

Fleming. Call upon your tutelary saints gracious Lady.

Stamping his foot impatiently.

Roland. Call the spirits of the hundred kings you are descended from, the resolution of a

monarch were worth the aid of a hundred saints.

[MARY holds out her hand to him across table, he kisses it, she slowly recovers herself.

Queen Mary. O, Roland Græme, be true to me!—many have been false to me. Alas! I have not always been true to myself. My mind misgives me that I shall die in bondage, and that this bold attempt will cost all our lives. It was foretold me by a soothsayer in France, that I should die in prison, and by a violent death, and here comes the hour—O, would to God it found me prepared!

Catherine. Madam, remember you are a queen. Better we all died in bravely attempting to gain our freedom, than remained here to be poisoned, as men rid them of the noxious vermin that haunt old houses.

Queen Mary. You are right, Catherine, and Mary will bear her like herself. But alas! your young and buoyant spirit can ill spell the causes which have broken mine. Forgive me my children and farewell. (*Rises and goes back to door C.*) I go to prepare with mind and body for this awful venture.

Catherine. O, the lark lives not a gayer life, nor sings a lighter and gayer song, than the merry soldier. Your Grace shall be in the midst of them soon, and the look of such a liege sovereign will make each of your host worth three in the hour of need.

*Sadly.
Looking out over the
audience.*

*Kissing Catherine
who stands R. of her
chair.*

Dancing a few steps.

C. looking at window
R.

Going up to window.
All these lines to end
of scene are spoken
eagerly and quickly.

Eagerly.

Catching his hands.

Going to table and
pouring oil from
flask on keys.

Queen Mary. We have but brief time, one of the two lights in the cottage is extinguished—that shows the boat is put off.

Roland. They will row very slow, or kent where depth permits, to avoid noise. (*Comes to MARY and kneels.*) May I pray you, my gracious liege, to retire for one half-hour, until all the castle is composed to rest? I must go and rub with oil these blessed implements of our freedom. Courage and constancy, and all will go well, provided our friends on the shore fail not to send the boat you spoke of.

Catherine. Fear them not, they are true as steel—if our dear mistress do but maintain her noble and royal courage.

Queen Mary. Doubt not me, Catherine, but now I was overborne, but I have recalled the spirit of my earlier and more sprightly days.

Turns and goes out quickly C. FLEMING follows her. CATHERINE goes up and then comes down to ROLAND, who stands R., looking at keys.

Catherine. Roland, do you play your part manfully, and we will dance on the greensward like midnight fairies!

ROLAND eagerly kisses her hands and then runs up to door with her laughing.

Exit CATHERINE.

Roland. Now, turn smooth and softly, thou good bolt, if ever oil softened rust!

[He goes to door L. as curtain falls.]

CURTAIN.

SCENE FROM "THE MILL ON THE FLOSS."

Mrs. Pullet's New Bonnet.

CHARACTERS.

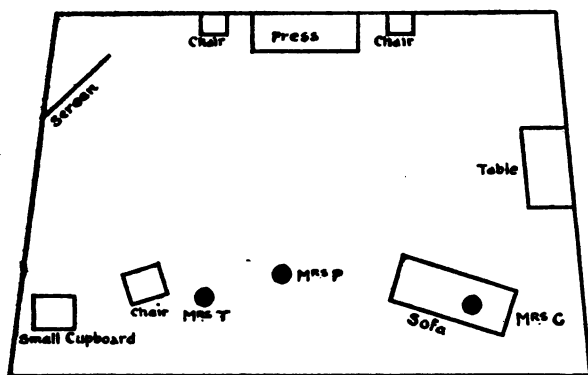
Mrs. PULLET	}	Sisters.
Mrs. GLEGG		
Mrs. TULLIVER		
TOM	}	Mrs. Tulliver's children.
MAGGIE		

Time, 1830.



SCENE.

A room furnished with solid ugly furniture. Sofa L.C., arm chair R.C. Large press at back of stage with two high chairs at either side of it. Mrs. GLEGG stalks in with strong masculine strides. Mrs. TULLIVER follows humbly and slinks into chair R., trying to attract as little notice as possible.



Enter Mrs. GLEGG and Mrs. TULLIVER R.U.E.

Mrs. Glegg. Well,—I don't know what ails sister Pullet. It used to be the way in our family for one to be as early as another. I'm sure it was so in my poor father's time. Not for one sister to be ready half an hour after the others came, but if the ways of the family

*Crosses and sits on the L. end of sofa.
Mrs. Tulliver sits on arm chair R.*

are altered it shan't be my fault. I'll never be one to come into a house when all the rest are going away. I wonder at sister Pullet!

Enter Mrs. PULLET R.U.E. weeping profusely.

Rising and hurrying to Mrs. Pullet.

Mrs. Tulliver. Why whatever is the matter sister, has Jane broken the glass in the best bedroom again?

[Mrs. PULLET weeping speechlessly, unties her cap-strings and carefully folds them out of the way of her tears, tucking a white handkerchief over them, she sinks on R. side of sofa next Mrs. GLEGG.]

Mrs. Glegg. (Snapping) Well, sister, you're late, what's the matter?

Mrs. Pullet. (Shaking her head in woe) She's gone. *[Relapses into sobs.]*

Mrs. Tulliver. (Much relieved, sits again R.) It isn't the glass this time then.

Emphasizing the words with her pocket handkerchief.

Mrs. Pullet. Dead the day before yesterday, and her arms was as thick as my body. "Mrs. Pullet" she says to me, when I went to see her last Christmas—"Mrs. Pullet, if ever you have the dropsy you'll think of me." These were her very words. And she's to be buried o' Saturday, and Pullet's bid to the funeral. *[Weeps profusely.]*

With much emphasis.

Mrs. Glegg. (Sniffs) Well Sophy its a mercy she is gone then whoever she may be; but I can't think who you *are* talking of, for my part.

Mrs. Pullet. B—. . But I know! *(Sighs and shakes her head)* I know as its old Mrs. Sutton o' Twenty Lands, and there isn't another such dropsy in the parish. *[Mrs. P. carefully puts*

away her handkerchief in pocket under skirt.]

Mrs. Glegg. (*Indignantly*) Sophy! I wonder at you fretting and injuring your health about people as is no kin o' yours, nor much acquaintance either as I ever heard of. Your poor father never did so, nor your Aunt Frances neither, nor any of the family as I've ever heard of. You couldn't fret more than this if we'd heard as our cousin Abbot had died sudden, without making his will!

[*Noise at the door R.U.E., Mrs. PULLET rises hurriedly.*]

Mrs. Pullet. Why, its those children of yours sister Bessie, and if they haven't got their feet in some nasty mud. Goodness gracious! Bessie, don't let 'em come off the oil-cloth. Sally, Sally, bring the old mat and them two dirty towels for their feet. There it is Bessie—it's what I've been telling you—it's your children,—there's no knowing what they'll come to.

[*The towels are brought and the shoes wiped, and TOM's feet wrapped round and tied up with towels he is seated on a chair L., back of stage, MAGGIE ditto R.*]

Mrs. Glegg. It's very bad luck sister as the gell should be so brown—the boy's fair enough, I doubt it'll stand in her way in life to be so brown.

[*Folds arms.*]

Mrs. Tulliver. What I ever did to have such naughty children, I'm sure I don't know, folks 'll say it was a judgment on me.

Mrs. Glegg. (*Shivering*) They're Tullivers, both of 'em Bessie, and take after their aunt Moss. For all the boy's got the Dodson complexion I doubt he'll be as contrary as his father.

[*The children are seated by this time.*]

*Spoken in sharp jerks.
Climax.
All troubles forgotten.*

*Called out door.
The towels are handed in from outside.*

Spoken during the business of tying up feet.

Who has stared hard at the children all the time.

Tearfully.

With a sudden sharp upward inflexion of voice.

Heyday ! Do little boys and girls come into a room without taking notice o' their aunts and uncles ? That wasn't the way when I was a little girl !

Their feet are tied together by the towels.

Mrs. Tulliver. (Anxiously) Go and speak to your aunts my dears.

[The children wriggle and shuffle over.]

The kisses are sharp pecks.

Mrs. Glegg. Well, and how do you do ? And I suppose you're good children are you ? (*Kisses them both.*) Look up Tom—look up—(*chucking him under the chin*)—Boys as go to boarding schools should hold their heads up. Look at me now ! Put your hair behind your ears Maggie and keep your frock on your shoulder.

Children shuffle to Mrs. PULLET who kisses them.

The children guided by Mrs. Tulliver turn and shuffle back to their places.

Mrs. Pullet. Well my dears, you grow wonderful fast—I doubt they'll out-grow their strength—I think the girl has too much hair, I'd have it thinned and cut short sister, if I was you ; it isn't good for her health. It's that makes her skin so brown I shouldn't wonder. Don't you think so sister Glegg ?

Very solemnly.

Mrs. Glegg. I can't say I'm sure, sister. How your husband does spoil that child, Bessy. It'll be the ruin of her if you don't take care, my father never brought his children up so ; else we should ha' been a different sort o' family to what we are. I can't leave them enough out o' my savings to keep them from ruin, and you mustn't look to having any o' Mr. Glegg's money, for it's well if I don't go first ; he comes of a long lived family, and if he was to die and leave me well off

for life, he'd tie up all his money to go back to his own kin.

Mrs. Tulliver. (Bridling) Lors, sister Glegg, you take one up so, who ever asked you to ?

[*Mrs. TULLIVER carefully extracts handkerchief from pocket under skirt and prepares to weep.*]

Mrs. Glegg. (More angrily) I hope I know my duty to my kin, Bessy, for all I see them headlong to ruin.

Mrs. Pullet. (Trying to make peace) La, Jane, how fiery you are, sure I'm sorry for Bessy with these children. I think of them o' nights dreadful, for I sleep very bad with this new medicine ; it's like what Mr. Carr had, and his breath was that short you could hear him two rooms off.

Confidentially.

Mrs. Glegg. Sophy, you do talk o' complaints till it's quite ondecant, you're the first Dodson ever ruined her constitution with Doctors' stuff ; and I don't want strangers brought into this conversation be their breath short or long. But I say this again, I didn't come way from home to be flouted and found fault with by them as ought to be grateful and humble. There's folk as I've lent money to as perhaps I shall repent o' lending money to kin (*Said at Mrs. TULLIVER*).

*Furious.
More and more
emphatic.*

[*Rises majestically.*]

I'm going down to the parlour, Sophy, and you can stay behind and occupy yourself with the ills of them that are no kin to you, if you're so minded. Perhaps you'll tell Sally to let me know when the tea is drawn.

*Gradual exit,
pausing to fire off a
last remark.*

[*Exit majestically.*]

Mrs. Tulliver. (Weeping) Sister Pullet do you think it 'ud be any use for you to go after and try to pacify her ?

Mrs. Pullet. (Smoothing down her frock) Oh, better let her be, she'll think better of it after a bit.

Mrs. Tulliver. (Whimpering) I'm sure I've no wish t' offend a sister.

Mrs. Pullet. Ah, there's no accounting for what Jane 'll do, I wouldn't speak of it out of the family—if it wasn't to Dr. Turnbull—but it's my belief Jane lives too low. I've said so to Pullet often and often, and he can tell you so. He's a wonderful memory, Pullet has. I should be poorly off if he was to have a stroke, for he always remembers when I'm to have my doctor's stuff.

[Rises, crosses R., throws open door of small cupboard.]

I'm taking *three* sets now, there's the pills as before, every other night ; and the new drops at eleven and four (*takes drops*), and the fervixing mixture, " when agreeable."

Mrs. Tulliver. Ah, perhaps it 'ud be better for sister Glegg if she'd go to the doctor sometimes, instead o' chewing Turkey Rhubarb when there's anything the matter with her.

Mrs. Pullet. (With a shudder) It's dreadful to think of—people playing with their own insides in that way—and it's *flying in the face o' Providence* ; for what are doctors for if we aren't to call 'em in. And when folks have got the *money* to pay for a doctor it isn't *respectable* ; as I've told you, Jane, many times ; I'm *ashamed of acquaint-*

Puts seat beside her to invite Mrs. Tulliver over. Mrs. Tulliver crosses and sits beside her.

With great satisfaction, pouring drops as she speaks.

Closes cupboard and returns L. to sit by Mrs. Pullet. Mrs. Tulliver nods and exclaims in agreement.

ance knowing it, but she's that saving; why as to her clothes she keeps 'em by till they're that creasy they're not fit to wear.

Mrs. Tulliver. (With a faint titter) Did you notice her cap, sister?

Mrs. Pullet. (Shutting her eyes with horror) It makes we ill to think of it, there's no knowing what sort of fright she'll come out next, sister.

A pause.

Jane and me were always contrary, she would have striped things, and I always like spots. You like a spot, too, Bessy; we always hung together i' that.

[Pats Mrs. TULLIVER'S hand.]

Mrs. Tulliver. Yes, Sophy! I remember our having a blue ground with a white spot both alike (I have a bit of it in the best quilt now), you always was a good sister to me.

A pause.

Mrs. Pullet. Mrs. Grey has sent home my new bonnet, Bessy.

Mrs. Tulliver. (Eagerly) Has she, sister? and how do you like it?

Mrs. Pullet. (With studied indifference). It's apt to make a mess with clothes taking 'em out and putting 'em in again; but it'd be a pity for you to go away without seeing it. (Sigh) There's no knowing what may happen.

Mrs. Tulliver. (Deprecatingly, puts her hands one on the other) I'm afraid it'll be troublesome to you getting it out, sister, but I should like to see what sort of a crown she's made you.

Retrospective.

Touched.

Very confidentially.

Begins tugging at a chain round her neck to bring up the key.

Mrs. Pullet. (Condescending) I'll see, and get it out for you, sister. [Rises and crosses R.

Mrs. Tulliver. May the children stay too, sister ?

This business must be done very slowly and deliberately. The bonnet must be held by passing the open hand under it into the crown.

Mrs. Pullet. (Unlocking drawer in small cupboard R., and taking out key) Well, it'll be safer for them to stay, may be. They'll be touching something if we send 'em behind.

[Mrs. PULLET crosses L. with key, unlocks a chest of drawers and takes out another key, unlocks press at back of stage and carries large handbox to sofa, where Mrs. TULLIVER rises and stands to watch, takes out fold after fold of tissue paper and then . . . the bonnet. Mrs. TULLIVER inspects it silently from every side. While she does so she moves her mouth as if she were chewing and swallowing.

With profound conviction.

Mrs. Tulliver. (After a long pause) Well, sister, I'll never speak against the full crown again.

Mrs. Pullet. (Pleased) You'd like to see it on, sister ? [Hands bonnet to Mrs. TULLIVER.

Mrs. Tulliver. (Very humbly) Well if you don't mind taking your cap off, sister.

[Mrs. PULLET takes off cap and places it in chair R., displaying curled front, puts on bonnet and slowly turns round. Mrs. TULLIVER watching as before.

Anxious pause.

Mrs. Pullet. (Slowly) I've sometimes thought there's a loop too much o' ribbon on this left side, sister, what do you think ?

Mrs. Tulliver. (Turning her head from R. to L. to see better) Well, I think it's best as it is; if you meddle with it, sister, you might repent.

Very piously.

Mrs. Pullet. (With a sigh) That's true, sister.

[Begins to take off and put away bonnet.

Mrs. Tulliver. How much might she charge you for that bonnet, sister?

As if calculating to herself.

Mrs. Pullet. (Mysteriously) Pullet pays for it; (Mrs. TULLIVER shows signs of great wonder and Mrs. PULLET confirms the statement with nods and whispers) he said I was to have the best bonnet at Garum Church, let the next best be what it would.

With a sigh.

[Puts it away, all the lockings up must be performed in reverse order again.

Ah, sister, I may never wear it twice, who knows!

Mrs. Tulliver. Don't talk o' that sister, I hope you'll have your health this summer.

Mrs. Pullet. Ah, but there may come a death in the family, as there did soon after I had my green satin bonnet. Cousin Abbot may go; and we can't think o' wearing crape less nor half a year for him!

[At small cupboard pores herself a glass of effervescing mixture and stirs it vigorously.

Mrs. Tulliver. That would be unlucky. There's never so much pleasure in wearing a bonnet the second year, especially when the crowns are so chancy, never two summers alike.

Impressed.

34 SCENES FROM THE GREAT NOVELISTS.

*Mrs. Tulliver clucks
a sympathetic assent.*

Mrs. Pullet. (Punctuated with sips of highly effervescing mixture) Ah, it's the way of the world ; and look at the physic it takes to keep me alive. Pullet keeps all the physic bottles ; did you know, Bessy (*sentimentally*). (*Opens the top of the cupboard.*) He won't have one sold. He says it's nothing but right folks should know them when I'm gone. They fill two o' the long store-room shelves a' ready, but its well if ever they fill three. I may go before I've made up the dozen o' the last size. The pill-boxes are in the closet in my room. You'll remember that sister—but there's nothing to show for the boluses, if it isn't the bills. Sister, if you should never see that bonnet again till I'm dead and gone—you'll remember I showed it you this day !

*Mrs. Pullet crosses
and holds Mrs.
Tulliver's hand.
Begins to weep.*

[*As she finishes she gradually breaks down and ends as the curtain closes, sobbing aloud. Mrs. TULLIVER patting her consolingly on the back and wiping her own eyes, the children sniffing for company. Both fetch out handkerchiefs from pockets under skirts.*

CURTAIN.

SCENE FROM "ADAM BEDE."

Mrs. Poyser has her Say Out.

CHARACTERS.

MARTIN POYSER, Tenant of the Hall Farm.

Mrs. POYSER, his wife.

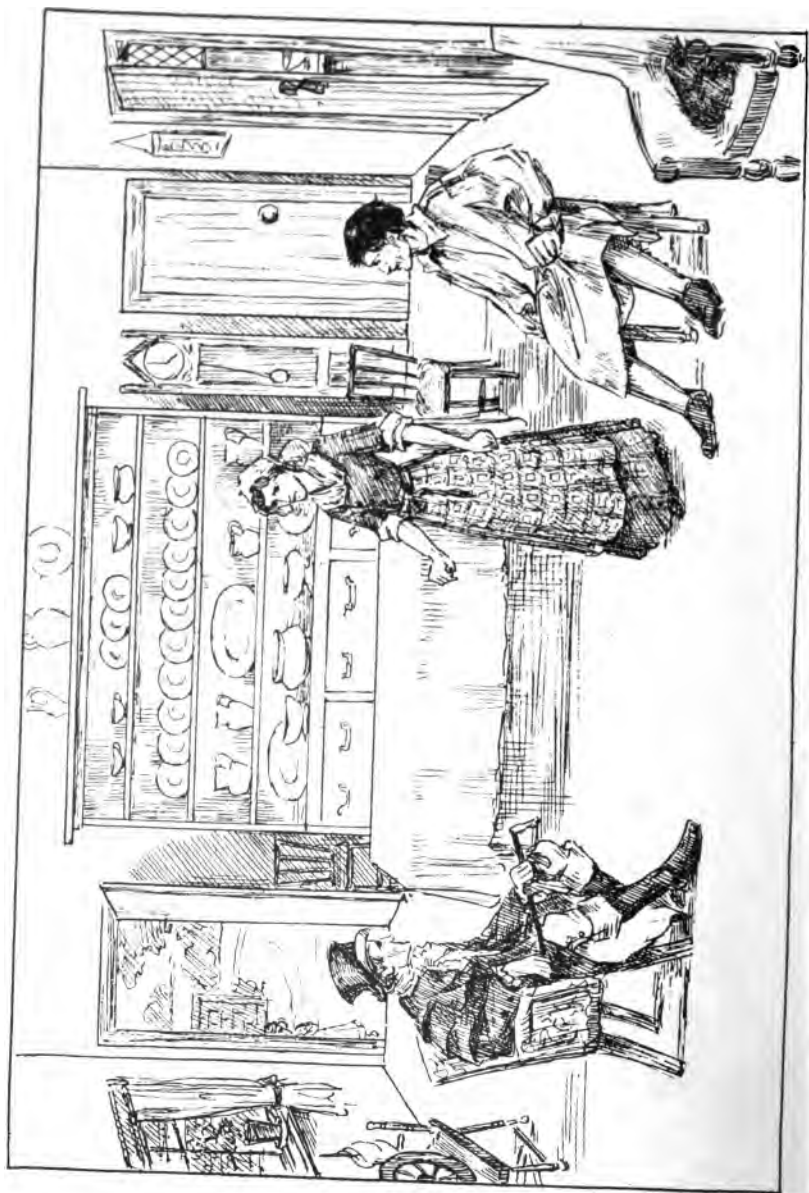
SQUIRE DONNITHORNE, their landlord.

MOLLY	}	Dairymaids.
BETTY		

Time, 1800.

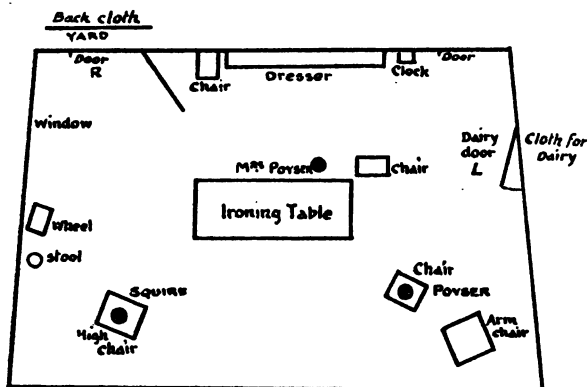






SCENE.—Mrs. POYSER'S KITCHEN.

Table across centre with ironing board, irons, pile of table cloths just ironed, bowl of starch. Dresser at back of stage with neat rows of china R. BETTY sits at a spinning wheel turning the distaff, a small stool near her. High wooden chair R.C. Easy chair and high chair L. Doors L. leading to dairy, and R. and L. of dresser in back. Farm yard seen through door R. and window. As curtain rises MOLLY carries large milk dish into dairy, and comes out wiping her hands on her apron, stands R. of Mrs. POYSER, who is ironing the last cloth.



Molly. I'm through with the churning and cleaned myself and all. Shall I sit down to the

Wiping her hands and shifting from one foot to another.

Mrs. Poyser's words are emphasized with the iron which she presses on the folds of the cloth.

Molly wriggles miserably as this speech proceeds. Betty glances round.

Gesture at Molly having laid down iron.

Higher voice at new question.

Iron waved at Molly.

Pressing carefully.

Molly begins to weep.

Twisting apron.

Very scornfully. Regretfully.

Molly sniffs and flings over beside Betty, beginning to spin.

wheel till milking time or go and comb the wool for the whittaws.

Mrs. Poyser. Spinning, indeed! It isn't spinning as you'd be at, I'll be bound, and let you have your own way. To think of a gell o' your age wanting to go and sit with half-a-dozen men! I'd ha' been *ashamed* to let the words pass over my lips if I'd been you. And you, as have been here ever since last Michaelmas, and you knew no more o' what belongs to work when you come here than the mawkin i' the field. As poor a two-fisted thing as ever I saw, you know you was. Who taught you to scrub a floor, I should like to know? And you've a right to feel that, and not to go about as gaping and as thoughtless as if you was beholding to nobody. Comb the wool for the whittaws, indeed! You're never easy till you've got some sweetheart as is as big a fool as yourself to talk to. There! some folks tongues is like the clocks that keep on striking. Not to tell you the time o' day, but because their's summat wrong i' their own inside.

Molly. I'm sure I donna wart t' go wi' the whittaws, on'y we alays used to comb the wool for'n at Mester Ottley's; an' so I just axed ye.

Mrs. Poyser. Mr. Ottley's, indeed! It's fine talking o' what you did at Mr. Ottley's—such ways as I've heard of! I never had a gell come into my house as seemed to know what cleaning was; I think people live like pigs, for my part. And to think o' your knowing no better, Molly, and been here a-going i' nine months, and not for want o' talking to, neither—and what are you stanning there for, like a jack as is run down,

instead o' getting your wheel out? You're a rare un for sitting down to your work a little while after it's time to put by, but there go and put the things away I'm through with the ironing.

[Mrs. POYSER goes up to dresser and takes off and folds ironing apron.

I know it 'ud be just the same if I was to talk to you for months. I might as well talk to the running brook, and tell it to stand still.

[Crosses L. Suddenly pausing by door.

Why, if there isn't old Squire Donnithorne riding into the yard. I shouldna wonder if he's come about that man as is a-going to take the Chase Farm, wanting Poyser to do something for him without pay. But Poyser's a fool if he does. Ay, there he is, peering about in that way as allays aggravates me; as if you was a insect and he was going to dab his finger nail on you. But I'm not the woman to misbehave towards my betters and fly in the face of the catechism for worse than that. Put away your wheels by the door and curtsey both of you and mind your duty.

[SQUIRE D. appears in door and peers in near sightedly drawing off his gloves. Mrs. POYSER knits standing L. of table.

Squire D. Good-day, Mrs. Poyser.

Mrs. Poyser. Your servant, sir.

[Curtseys and goes on knitting.

Squire D. Is your husband at home, Mrs. Poyser?

Mrs. Poyser. Yes, sir; he's only i' the rick-

*Slowly.
Molly obeys sulkily.*

Puts away ironing things in drawer of dresser.

Molly and Betty both came up to door and look out.

Mrs. Poyser takes out her knitting from pocket of her second apron and begins to knit.

Molly and Betty clear wheel and stools to window and stand there.

He speaks with exaggerated precision.

Immovably.

*Squire nods to maids
as he comes R. of
table.*

*Drawing off gloves
and laying hat and
crag on table as he
peers round.*

*Calmly.
Squire dusts his
riding boots on the
handkerchief.*

*The invitation is not
cordial.*

*Unconscious of
irony.
Pausing at door L.
Mrs. Poyser glances
over her shoulder at
dairy, it is her soft
spot.*

yard. I'll send for him in a minute, if you'll please to step in.

Squire D. Thank you ; I will do so. I want to consult him about a little matter ; but you are quite as much concerned in it, if not more. I must have your opinion too. I must have your opinion too——

Mrs. Poyser. Betty, run and tell your uncle to come in. [A pause.

Squire D. What a fine old kitchen this is ! And you keep it so exquisitely clean, Mrs. Poyser. (Mrs. POYSER starts and knits furiously.) I like these premises, do you know, beyond any on the estate.

Mrs. Poyser. Well, sir, since you're fond of 'em, I *should* be glad if you'd let a bit o' repairs be done to 'em, for the boarding's i' that state, as we're like to be eaten up wi' rats and mice ; and the cellar, you may stan' up to your knees i' water in't, if you like to go down ; but *perhaps* you'd rather believe my words. Won't you please to sit down, sir ?

Squire D. Not yet ; I must see your dairy. I have not seen it for years, and I hear on all hands about your fine cheese and butter. I think I see the door open, there ; you must not be surprised if I cast a covetous eye on your cream

[SQUIRE crosses L., passing before table, and stands at door waving his fine white handkerchief to and fro, to keep off the damp ; He does not attempt to go in.

and butter. I don't expect that Mrs. Satchell's cream and butter will bear comparison with yours.

Mrs. Poyser. I can't say, sir, I'm sure. It's seldom I see other folks's butter, though there's some on it as one's no need to see—the smell's enough.

Squire D. Ah, now this I really like, this I really like. I'm sure I should like my breakfast better if I knew the butter and cream came from this dairy. Thank you, that really is a pleasant sight. Unfortunately, my slight tendency to rheumatism makes me afraid of damp; I'll sit down in your comfortable kitchen. (*Enter Mr. POYSER R.U.E.*) Ah, Poyser, how do you do? In the midst of business, I see, as usual. I've been looking at your wife's beautiful dairy—the best manager in the parish, is she not? the best manager in the parish.

Poyser. Will you please to take this chair, sir? (*Brings forward arm chair L.*) You'll find it easy.

Squire D. No, thank you, I never sit in easy chairs. Do you know, Mrs. Poyser—sit down, pray, both of you—I've been far from contented, for some time, with Mrs. Satchell's dairy management. I think she has not a good method, as you have.

Mrs. Poyser. Indeed, sir, I can't speak to that (as if I'd give in to any such smooth-tongued palaver). [*Aside.*]

Squire D. And now, Poyser, as Satchell is laid up, I am intending to let the Chase Farm to a respectable tenant. I'm tired of having a farm on my own hands—nothing is made the best of in such cases, as you know. A satisfactory bailiff

*With calm scorn.
This needs no
emphasis.*

At door.

*He walks back to
chair R. very stiffly.*

*He dusts the chair
as he absently
repeats his words.
Mrs. Poyser watches
him angrily.*

*With perfect
composure.*

*Looking away R.
Poyser invites her in
dumb show to sit
down, and on her
refusal sits down
himself.*

*Bows to Mrs. Poyser
who stands rolling
and unrolling her
knitting and raising
stonily at Molly.*

is hard to find ; and I think you and I, Poyser, and your excellent wife here, we must not forget her, must we Poyser, can enter into a little arrangement in consequence, which will be to our mutual advantage. [Pause.

Poyser. Oh. [Slowly and blankly.

Poyser sits leaning well forward joining and unjoining the tips of his fingers as if he wanted to make them into the ribs of a boat.

Mrs. Poyser. If I'm called upon to speak, sir (*glancing pityingly at her husband*) you know better than me ; but I don't see what the Chase Farm is t' us—we've cumber enough wi' our own farm. Not but what I'm glad to hear o' anybody respectable coming into the parish ; there's some as ha' been brought in as hasn't been *looked on i' that* character.

Meaningly.

Unconsciously.

Squire D. You're likely to find Mr. Thurle an excellent neighbour, I assure you ; such a one as you will feel glad to have accommodated by the little plan I'm going to mention ; especially as I hope you will find it as much to your own advantage as his.

Mrs. Poyser. Indeed, sir, if it's anything to our advantage, it'll be the first offer o' the sort I've heard on. It's them as *take* advantage that *get* advantage i' this world, I think ; folks have to wait long enough afore it's brought to 'em.

Ignoring her. As if the thing were quite simple and obvious. Looks absently at his nails.

Squire D. The fact is, Poyser, there is too much dairy land, and too little plough land, on the Chase Farm, to suit Thurle's purpose—indeed, he will only take the farm on condition of some change in it ; his wife, it appears, is not a clever dairy-woman, like yours, Mrs. Poyser (*bows*). Now, the plan I'm thinking of is to effect a little exchange. If you were to have the Hollow

Pastures you might increase your dairy, which must be so profitable under your wife's management; and I should request you, Mrs. Poyser, to supply my house with milk, cream, and butter at the market prices. On the other hand, Poyser, you might let Thurle have the Lower and Upper Ridges, which really, with our wet seasons, would be a good riddance for you.

[There is a long pause. POYSER sits with his eyes on his hands, Mrs. POYSER watches him fixedly; the SQUIRE polishes his nails; POYSER wishes to avoid the responsibility of giving a disagreeable avower.]

Poyser. What dost say?

Mrs. Poyser. Say? Why, I say you may do as you like about giving up any o' your corn land afore your lease is up, which it *won't* be for a year come next Michaelmas, but I'll not consent to take more dairy work into my hands, either for love or money; and there's nayther love nor money here, as I can see, on'y other folks's love o' *themselves*, and the money as is to go into other folks's *pockets*. Oh, I know there's them as is born t' own the land, and them as is born to sweat on't—(*gasps*)—and I know it's christened folks's duty to submit to their *bettors as fur as flesh and blood 'ull bear it*; but I'll not make a *martyr* o' myself, and wear myself to skin and bone, and *worret* myself as if I was a *churn* wi' butter a-coming in't, for no landlord in England, not if he was *King George himself*.

Squire D. No, no, my dear Mrs. Poyser, you must not overwork yourself. Mrs. Poyser must not over work herself, must she, Poyser; but

Poyser looks up sharply at this proposal.

Mrs. Poyser turns away her head with a toss, spearing her knitting together with the loose pin, holding it firmly between her clasped hands. Very contemptuous at his weakness.

The words now begin to flow unchecked.

Soothingly. His manner suggests one addressing a fretful child.

don't you think your work will rather be lessened than increased in this way? There is so much milk required at the Abbey, that you will have little increase to cheese and butter making from the addition to your dairy; and I believe selling the milk is the most profitable way of disposing of dairy produce, is it not?

Poyser. Ay, that's true.

Mrs. Poyser. I daresay—I daresay it's true for men as sit i' th' chimney-corner and make believe as everything's cut wi' ins an' outs to fit int' everything else. If you could make a pudding wi' *thinking* o' the batter, it 'ud be *easy* getting dinner. How do I know whether the milk 'ull be wanted *constant*? *What's* to make me sure as the house won't be put o' board wage afore we're many months older, and then I may have to lie awake o' nights wi' *twenty gallons o' milk on my mind*—and Dingall 'ull take no more *butter*, let alone paying for it; and we must *fat pigs* till we're obliged to beg the butcher on our knees to *buy 'em*, and lose half of 'em wi' the *measles*. And there's the fetching and carrying, as 'ud be welly half a day's work for a man an' hoss—that's to be took out o' the profits, I reckon? But there's folks 'ud hold a *sieve* under the pump and expect to carry away the *water*.

Squire D. That difficulty—about the fetching and carrying—you will not have, Mrs. Poyser; Bethell will do that regularly with the cart and pony.

Mrs. Poyser. Oh, sir, begging *your pardon*, I've never been used t' having gentlefolks's servants coming about *my back places*, a-making love to

Glancing L. at Poyser with bitter contempt. Much inflexion. Growing force as the horrors of the situation unfold before her.

Pleased to think she is descending to details.

Brushing his words aside. Draws back a little L. and begins to knit hard.

both the gells at *once*, and keeping 'em with their hands on their hips listening to all manner o' gossip when they should be down on their knees *a-scouring*. If we're to go to *ruin*, it shanna be wi' having our back kitchen turned into a *public*.

Squire D. Well, Poyser, you can turn the Hollows into feeding-land. I can easily make another arrangement about supplying my house. And I shall not forget your readiness to accommodate your landlord as well as a neighbour. I know you will be glad to have your lease renewed for three years when the present one expires; otherwise, I daresay Thurle, who is a man of some capital, would be glad to take both the farms, as they could be worked so well together. But I don't want to part with an old tenant like you.

Poyser. Well, sir, I think as it's rether hard.

Mrs. Poyser. Then, sir, if I *may* speak—as, for all I'm a woman, and there's folks as thinks a woman's fool enough to stan' by an' look on while the men sign her soul away. Oh, I'm not denyin' the women are fools, *Heaven made 'em* to match the men! but I've a *right* to speak, for I make one quarter o' the rent, and save another quarter. I say, if Mr. Thurle's so ready to take farms under you, it's a *pity* but what he should take *this*, and see if he likes to live in a house wi' *all* the *plagues* o' *Egypt* in't—wi' the *cellar* full o' water, and *frogs* and *toads* hoppin' up the steps by dozens—and the *floors* rotten, and the *rats* and mice gnawing every bit o' *cheese*, and runnin' over our heads as we lie i' bed till we

Knits again.

Drawing his chair forward and pretending to believe that Mrs. Poyser has left the room.

Poyser sits up sharply. Mrs. Poyser stops knitting and spears her pins through the stocking.

Mildly remonstrant.

With a sudden burst of passion.

Poyser tries to soothe her and she turns on him.

The Squire gazes at her in incredulous wonder.

Hands on sides. Voice very varied. It is difficult to keep this long tirade from growing into a monotonous scold.

expect 'em to eat us up *alive*—as it's a mercy they hanna eat the children *long* ago. I should like to see if there's another tenant besides Poyser as 'ud put up wi' never having a bit o' repairs done till a place tumbles *down*—and not *then*, on'y wi' *begging* and *praying*, and having to pay *half*—and being strung up wi' the *rent* as it's *much* if he gets enough out o' the land to *pay*, for all he's put his own money into the ground beforehand. See if you'll get a stranger to lead such a life here as that. You may run away from my words, sir.

The SQUIRE rises, he is showing his teeth in a snarling smile, gathers up hat, crop, and gloves, and goes to door R.U.E., where he stands making signals with his crop to some one outside, and growing more and more impatient.

Runs round to back of table, follows up and faces him.

You may run away from my words, sir, and you may go spinnin' underhand ways o' doing us a mischief, for you've got *Old Harry* to your friend, though nobody else is, but I tell you for once as we're not dumb *creatures* to be *abused* and made *money* on by them as ha' got the *lash* i' their hands, for want o' knowing how t' undo the tackle. An' if I'm the *only* one as *speaks* my mind, there's *plenty* o' the same way o' thinking i' this parish and the next to 't, for your *name's* no better than a *brimstone match* in *everybody's* nose—if it isna two-three old folks as you think o' saving your soul by giving 'em a bit o' flannel and a drop o' porridge. (*Enter BETTY and MOLLY L., Exit SQUIRE R.U.E.*) An' you may be right i' thinking it'll take but little to save your soul,

Mrs. Poyser screams out the door after Squire.

for it'll be the smallest savin' y' iver made, wi' all your scrapin'.

[The maids roll in silent laughter.]

[When she has finished her exordium and the SQUIRE has vanished, Mrs. POYSER turns and gives one glance at the maids, who vanish with the most instant speed through dairy door. She draws out her knitting and sits R. in the SQUIRE'S chair, panting a little, but triumphant, her mouth working and her fingers twitching sharply as she knits. A Pause.]

Poyser. Thee'st done it now.

Mrs. Poyser. Yes, I know I've done it; but I've had my say out, and I shall be th' easier for't all my life. There's no pleasure i' living, if you're to be corked up for ever, and only dribble your mind out by the sly, like a leaky barrel. I shan't repent saying what I think, if I live to be as old as th' old Squire; and there's little likelihoods—for it seems as if them as aren't wanted here are th' only folks as aren't wanted i' th' other world.

[POYSER is uneasy, but pleased at his wife's triumph over the SQUIRE.]

Poyser. But thee wutna like moving from th' old place this Michaelmas twelvemonth, and going into a strange parish, where thee know'st nobody. It'll be hard upon us both, and upo' father too.

[Mrs. POYSER knits on more viciously than ever.]

Mrs. Poyser. Eh, it's no use worreting; there's plenty o' things may happen between this

Poyser watches her silently, his hands on his knees.

Rather ruefully.

Knitting jerkily; speaks in a tone of deep satisfaction.

More sadly.

Shaking his head

Cheerfully but more quietly.

and Michaelmas twelvemonth. The Captain may be master afore then, for what we know.

[As she speaks the reaction begins and her voice fails a little.

Poyser. I'm none for worreting, but I should be loath to leave the old place, and the parish where I was bred and born, and father afore me. We should leave our roots behind us, I doubt, and niver thrive again.

[As POYSER speaks Mrs. POYSER's cheerfulness gradually fails her. She lowers her head, drops her knitting, and holding one corner of her apron to her eyes, begins to sob softly to herself; POYSER comforting her in dumb show.

CURTAIN.

Rising crosses to Mrs. Poyser and places his hand on her shoulder.

SCENE FROM "A CHRISTMAS CAROL."

The Crachits' Christmas Dinner.

CHARACTERS.

BOB CRACHIT, a poor clerk in the employment
of Mr. Scrooge.

Mrs. CRACHIT, his wife.

MARTHA, a milliner's apprentice

BELINDA

PETER

DICK

JENNY

TINY TIM, a little cripple

} Their children.

SCENE.—A room in Bob Crachit's little house the
evening of Christmas Day.

Time, 1843.



SCENE.—THE CRATCHIT'S KITCHEN.

Large round table L.C., seven chairs and a stool round the room. Folded cloth on table. Table and small box to sit on R. Fireplace in wall R. Screen R.U.E. Dresser with odd dishes and plates back C. Door L. at back leading to back kitchen. Towel horse screen L. PETER discovered stirring potatoes over fire in a large saucepan with a wooden spoon, he has on a huge collar, several sizes too large for him, the points constantly getting in his way he carefully pushes them back.

[Enter Mrs. CRATCHIT door L., calling

Now Peter! Peter! Peter! Have you done the potatoes? Peter.

[At table. Sets down tray with knives, forks, spoons, salt, water.

Peter. They're knocking at the saucepan lid to be let out, Mother.

Mrs. C. Peel 'em then! There's a good boy—my! lets look at your collar!

[Turns him round by the shoulders.

Peter. (Touching his head in salute) Ready to show my linen in the fashionable "poks" mum!

Mrs. C. (Laughing with her hands on her sides) Why, if the corners don't keep getting in his mouth.

[She bustles off and begins laying the table while Peter returns to his potatoes.

Parks.

It is most important that all the characters should look busy and eager about their work while they talk. There is no room for idle people in the Cratchit household.

(BELINDA outside heard calling) Mother ! Mother.

[She rushes in breathless and hugs Mrs. C., whose hands are full, then instantly begins helping her to lay the table while they talk and admire dress and ribbons.

Belinda. Mother ! thank you so much for the ribbons (spins round on her heels). Look, ain't we fine.

Mrs. C. (Hurriedly kissing her) Bless you my dear look at me !

Taking a fold of dress in her fingers.

Belinda. Won't Father be pleased—(Puts round knives and two pronged forks) and the gown does look nice mother ! It was well worth turning the second time.

Mrs. C. That's the good of a good material, ducky.

[Cries heard outside.

Mrs. C. Ah, here are the children.

[DICK and JENNY run on from R.U.E., calling out breathlessly both together.

Children. Mother ! Peter ! Belinda ! Mother !

Mrs. C. Why, bless the children, what's the matter.

Both dancing with excitement, and trying to shout one louder than the other.

Children. Mother ! mother ! outside the bakers ! the goose ! Me and Jenny ! Sage and onions. We knew it was ours ! We knew it was.

A little anxiously.

Mrs. C. Why, as if one could hear you talking both together, what's wrong with the goose.

Jenny. Nothing, nothing ! but outside the bakers me and Dick smelt it, and knew it for ours.

[Mrs. C. and BELINDA both laugh.

Dick. Truly mother we did! And oh—the sage and onions was bee-u-ti-ful.

[A deep sigh from both children.

[Mrs. C. and BELINDA kiss them laughing, and then they turn to PETER who is turning the potatoes out of their skins at table R. Mrs. C. goes out of the room and brings back small saucepan, while BELINDA finishes the table.

All this business must be neatly and quickly done, as if it were a usual thing.

Jenny. (Dancing in front of PETER) Huh! look at his collar!

Dick. (Much impressed) Don't it nearly choke you, Peter. Where d'ye get it.

Peter. (Impressively) It's father's—gave it to 'cause it was Christmas day.

Both Children. My!—(They run off by the door L. whispering about the pudding).

[BELINDA having finished the table gets a handful of holly and begins putting it up, saving one big piece for the pudding.

Mrs. C. (Bustling up to door R. and down again) What has ever got your precious father then? And your brother, Tiny Tim; and Martha wasn't as late last Christmas day by half an hour.

[Enter MARTHA briskly at door R.

Martha. Here's Martha, mother!

Soft deep voice.

[Crosses quickly to Mrs. C. and hugs her, while the two children run out of door L. crying out.

Children. Here's Martha, mother! Hurrah! there's such a goose, Martha.

[They rush at MARTHA and kiss her.

Martha crosses to dresser and sets down bag of oranges on shelf.

Martha's accent and manner must be very quiet and kind. She is a little more refined than the others but quite unconscious of the fact.

Mrs. C. (Helping MARTHA off with her bonnet and cape, and fussing over her as she speaks) Why bless your heart alive my dear how late y' are.

Martha. We'd a deal of work to finish up last night, mother. And we had to clear away this morning.

[Kisses BELINDA who runs in L. DICK and JENNY go up to door R. and look out. MARTHA kisses PETER.

Mrs. C. Well, never mind so long as y' are here. Sit ye down before the fire my dear and have a warm. Lor bless ye!

[Draws MARTHA to chair R.

Children. No, no. Here's father coming. Hide! Martha hide.

[MARTHA is hustled away behind screen L. Mrs. C. begins cutting bread at table. PETER and the two little Cratchits ostentatiously turn their backs on MARTHA's hiding place, and choke with ill-suppressed laughter. BELINDA goes to dresser and turns her back, or goes off if the stage is too crowded. Meanwhile outside R.U.E. loud stampings, snortings, and cries of Whoa! Whoa! are heard. Enter BOB prancing with TINY TIM on his shoulder. Round BOB's chin are red wool reins knitted, which TIM pulls, shouting, Whoa! Whoa! BOB prances wildly.

Tiny Tim is lame and carries a little crutch, he is pale and delicate, but a merry mischievous little person.

Light high voice, quite sweet, but wanting in fulness.

Tim. Mother, mother! Daddy was my blood horse all the way from church, and came home prancing.

Mrs. C. (*Helping to lift him down and hugging him*) Did he, my darling, bless you.

Bob. (*Undoing reins and unwinding some yards of comforter, looks round*) Why, where's our Martha.

Mrs. C. (*With elaborate indifference*) Not—eh—Coming.

[PETER and the two little Cratchits explode.
BELINDA signs to them to be quiet.

Bob. (*Suddenly sitting down R. and quite sadly*) Not coming! Not coming on Christmas day. Oh. . . oh . . . !

[Rocks back and forward very sadly. The children unable to hold out longer burst out laughing. MARTHA rushes out from behind screen and falls on her knees, with her arms round BOB.

Martha. No! no! Daddy, I'm not coming, I'm here!

[They hug one another and TIM, while the children dance round in triumph, and Mrs. C. pats BOB on the back and laughs at him. All make fun of BOB, who laughs most at himself and hugs MARTHA.

Children and Peter. (*Dancing*) Hurrah! hurrah! Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas.

Tim. Meh Kismas!

All laugh.

Children. (*Catching TIM between them*) Tim! Tim! come and hear the pudding singing in the copper!

Chanting

Last of all.

Mrs. C. No! no! be off both of you and fetch the goose before we can say Jack Robinson.

[*The children and PETER cheer and run off R. crying.*

Children. Hurray! hurrah! the goose, the goose.

[*TINY TIM whispers eagerly to BELINDA, who leads him off L. MARTHA finishes the holly, dusts plates, helps BELINDA with the sauce when she comes back. Both keep up L.*

Mrs. C. (*Cutting bread*) And how did little Tim behave?

Bob. (*Seated R., untying rest of comforter*) As good as gold—and better. Somehow, he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and he thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church because . . . because he was a cripple . . . and it might be pleasant to them to remember—upon Christmas day—Who made—lame beggars walk—and blind men see.

[*A long pause. BOB blows his nose. Mrs. C. turns her back to the audience and wipes her eyes stealthily with her apron.*

Bob. Why, Tiny Tim is growing strong and hearty now, don't you think so, mother.

Mrs. C. (*Very gravely, laying her hand on BOB's shoulder*) Ay dear, strong and hearty—please God.

[*A pause, both stand quite still, till TINY TIM is heard calling out L.*

Tim's limp is best kept up by a difference in the height of his shoes.

Bob's voice shakes a little as he goes on.

Tim. Mother, mother! (*He enters hirpling along quickly with his crutch*) I heard it—I heard the pudding singing in the copper, truly I did.

Mrs. C. Did you my lamb.

Bob. (*Catching TIM in his arms and holding him passionately*) My little child, my little child

[*MARTHA and BELINDA have finished the holly. Mrs. C. crosses L. BOB jumps up and shakes himself.*

Bob. Now, mother, mother, mother, where's the lemons, we must make our brew.

Mrs. C. (*Bringing over tray*) I've put them all ready for you, father—here they are.

[*Sets tray on table R.*

Bob. (*Turning up his cuffs and drawing up to table*) Now, Tim, you help me make the punch.

[*They busy themselves R.*

Mrs. C. (*Bustles from the table to the dresser, back to table L., then to door and fireplace*) Now then, they'll be here before we know where we are! Where's the gravy, Belinda? (*BELINDA fetches little saucepan from fire*). Hissing hot is it? That's right (*pours it into cup*). Dust the hot plates, Martha, there's a dear.

Belinda puts away saucepan.

[*MARTHA fetches them from inner kitchen L. and does so.*

Ah, here they are.

Mrs. C. listens.

[*Sounds outside door R. DICK enters playing "See the conquering hero comes" on a roll of paper, through which he tootles violently. PETER follows, marching in time to the music, holding the goose on a*

large dish covered with a tin dish-cover. JENNY follows waving a red pocket handkerchief and cheering; BOB, MARTHA, and TIM all wave and cheer.

Mrs. C. (*Laughing*) Why, I declare! one would think it was a black swan you were bringing. Now look alive and don't let it get cold children, for gracious sake.

[*A wild bustle ensues. Mrs. C. sets the goose on the table. The two young C.'s rush round the table putting chairs; knock against one another—pull the same chair and repeat the names of those needing chairs at the tops of their voices as they run.*

Peter goes to fire and does potatoes.

Mrs. C. (*Through the tumult*) Is the punch ready father.

Bob. Yes, yes, my dear. (*Crosses L. with TIM*) Come Tim.

Mrs. C. Don't forget to put the sugar in the apple sauce, Belinda.

Belinda. No, mother. [*She does so.*

Mrs. C. Have you chairs for every one, children.

[*Fetching gravy and pouring it over goose.*

Children. (*Shouting*) Yes, mother, yes!

Calls out.

Peter. (*Who has been finishing up the potatoes brings them over triumphantly to table L.*) Here's potatoes! potatoes!

Martha sits.

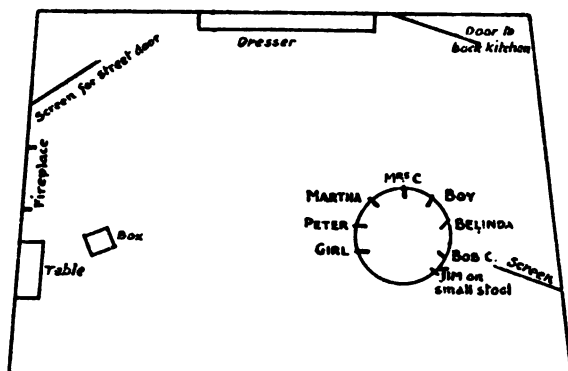
Mrs. C. Now sit down and for mercy sake be quiet!

[*Every one rushes to their places, and the two little C.'s are seen cramming their spoons into their mouths to keep from talking.*

Mrs. C. (To BOB) Bless their hearts, look at them cramming spoons into their mouths lest they should shriek for goose before their turn comes to be helped.

[Mrs. C. takes her place at the head of the table, and taps with her spoon.

Mrs. C. Now, my dears—all of you !



Behind Bob's chair.
Belinda sits.

[This is the cue for final places. All the foregoing lines must be carried on in a babel of talk in which everyone takes part, and amid a general bustle which must be most carefully rehearsed and never allowed to become confused. Now all sit quite still and fix their eyes on the goose. Mrs. C. looks slowly along the carver, poises it a moment in her hand—then with great precision plunges the point into the goose.

Martha uncovers
the goose.

All Children. (In unison) Oh !

A deep groan of
delight.

Dick. (In a stage whisper) Look at the stuffing.

[BELINDA hushes him sharply. TIM beats on the table with his spoon and cries in a high little pipe.

Tim. Hurrah !

All laugh.

Mrs. C. (Helping) There, father. Pass the potatoes, Peter. Now Martha. Apple sauce, Belinda. There's the breast bone for Tiny Tim, and Peter the drumstick.

[Pauses a moment reflectively with spoon in air.

Dick and Jenny, no stuffing for you, I suppose.

Both Children. (Clamour amid general laughter) Yes, mother, yes ! lots—heaps.

Mrs. C. There now, keep quiet, do. (Helping them) There's enough for everybody my dears—enough for everybody, thank goodness.

[By this time everybody is helped, there follows a moment of absolute silence during which only the sounds of eating are heard, and this pause should be held if possible, till the audience laugh.

Bob. (Very seriously, eating) Do you know, my dear, this is a most remarkable goose.

Martha. It's so tender.

[All the children nod their heads with their mouths full and murmur agreement.

All. Yum.

Peter. Such a size.

Same business.

This is all spoken very slowly but almost continuously, and with each phrase a portion is given while the others pass and help things.

Jenny. Such a flavour.

Same business.

Belinda. And I'm sure it was wonderfully cheap, wasn't it mother.

Same business from Mrs. C.

Bob. In fact my dears—if your mother will allow me to say so, I don't believe their ever was such a goose cooked.

All laugh and applaud.

Mrs. C. Have some more, father.

Bob. Not another morsel, my dear! I'm sure I couldn't.

Mrs. C. Martha.

Martha. No more, mother.

Mrs. C. Belinda!

Belinda. Not a scrap, mother.

Mrs. C. Peter!

Peter. I've just been finishing the potatoes, mother.

All laugh.

Mrs. C. Dick, Jenny?

Peter. No need to ask them mother, they're sage and onion to the eyebrows.

All laugh.

Mrs. C. (*Pointing to remains of goose on dish*) There, my dears, just look at that, we haven't ate it all at last. (*Rises.*) Now Belinda dear, just change the plates while I go and take up the pudding and bring it in.

Martha. Let me go, mother, I'll fetch it.

With the air of one making a most daring joke. Dick chokes and Belinda pats him on the back.

Peter helps himself to the rest of the potatoes.

Putting plates together.

Shaking her head.

With his mouth full.

Mrs. Cratchit asks Tim in dumb show and he refuses.

All help in gathering plates.

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Mrs. C. (Turning back at door C.) No thanks, my dearie! I feel a bit nervous like—and as if I'd rather be alone. Thank you dear, all the same.

[Exit Mrs. CRATCHIT. BELINDA and PETER clear and set round plates, BOB pours out a drink of water for TIM then all sit silent. Pause.]

Peter. (In a whisper) Suppose it shouldn't be done enough.

Dick. Suppose it should break in turning out.

Jenny. Suppose someone should have got over the wall of the back yard and stolen it while we were eating the goose.

All Three. (Groaning) Oh!

Bob. Hello, there's a great deal of steam.

All Three Children. It's out of the copper.

Martha. Why, there's a smell like washing day.

All Three Children. That's the cloth.

Belinda. I think its more like an eating house and a pastry cooks next door to each other.

Bob. And a laundresses next door to that.

All Children. It's the pudding!

[Mrs. C. enters L. bearing pudding proudly, it is small, black and round, on a large dish blazing in blue fire. All children cheer and drum their spoons on the table. MARTHA and BELINDA clap their hands.]

Bob. (Looking at it) Oh, a wonderful pudding.

Tim. Muver, muver, why is it it all on fire, won't it burn?

Gloomily, his eyes fixed on the table.

Same manner.

Very anxiously.

Intently.

Intently.

Triumphantly.

Mrs. C. No, my lamb, it's only half of half a quartern of brandy just to keep it crisp.

Peter. Give me the holly, mother.

[*He fastens it in his button hole.* Mrs. C. *helps them all during this time and there is silence while the pudding is being consumed.*

Bob. (*Impartially, tasting it and then laying down his fork with the air of a connoisseur*) Do you know my dear—I regard this—as the greatest triumph—you have achieved—since our marriage.

Very slowly.

Mrs. C. (*With a sigh*) Well, Robert; now the weight's off my mind, I don't mind telling you—I must confess—I had my doubts about the quantity of flour.

Bob. Perfect, my dear, I assure you. Perfect.

Still tasting.

Mrs. C. And I did wish it could have been a trifle bigger.

Her voice trembles a little.

Martha and Belinda. Mother!

Indignantly.

Bob. My dear! That would have been greed I assure you—sheer greed—I should blush to hear any child of mine hint at such a thing.

In a tone of mild rebuke. All children look quite superior to such an idea.

Mrs. C. Still, they are getting big lads, you know, Robert.

Pensively.

Bob. (*Briskly*) Ay, that they are! And master Peter there—if I'm not mistaken, I have a situation in my eye for master Peter which will bring in not a penny less than five and six a week.

The others stare at Peter and nudge one another.

Peter. (*Looks important behind his collar.*)

All. Oh, five and six.

Dick. And Peter a man of business.

All. (Laugh and tease PETER, who kicks DICK under the table).

Mrs. C. Now my dears clear away! clear away!

[*All rise and clear away with a slight bustle but much more quietly than before.*]

Mrs. C. (To Martha) No, not you, my dearie. Sit you here and have a rest. It isn't often you get one.

Martha. Ah, but mother, it's good when it comes, and we haven't had to stand near so much lately. Not but what I'm going to lie a bed to-morrow for the holiday.

Mrs. C. (Hugging her) And so you shall my dear.

Martha. Ah, but mother, wait till next year, when I shall be out of my time, and then see what a gad about I shall be, with all the fine customers to see to. Why only last week we had a Countess in for orders.

All exclaim and listen.

All. My—a countess—think of that.

Martha. Ay, and some days before a Lord. Not a bit grand, only about as big as Peter there.

[*All laugh and tease PETER who is helping Mrs. C. to fold the cloth.*]

Exit DICK and JIM.

Bob. (Who has just tasted the mixture in jug) Now, my dears—my dears—Not another moment, its . . . its perfect.

(*All hurry round*) Where are the glasses, Belinda?

[*BELINDA brings them from dresser.*]

Sits R. near Bob who is examining the punch in jug.

Belinda stops clearing and runs to kneel by Martha and listen.

Martha warming to her description. The two children go out L.

Belinda. Here, father.

Bob. That's it.

[The two smaller children cry out L.

Children.* Chesnuts! chestnuts!

[They run in with a large shovel full of roasted chestnuts, which they put on the table R.

Bob. (Pouring out mixture) Ah, that's it—two tumblers and the custard cup, my dear, though it hasn't got a handle. It'll taste just as good as out of golden goblets.

Martha. (Fetching a paper bag from the dresser) Look, here's my share of the feast.

[She empties half a dozen oranges on the floor, where the children scramble for them.

All. Oranges! oranges!

Peter. Three cheers for Martha.

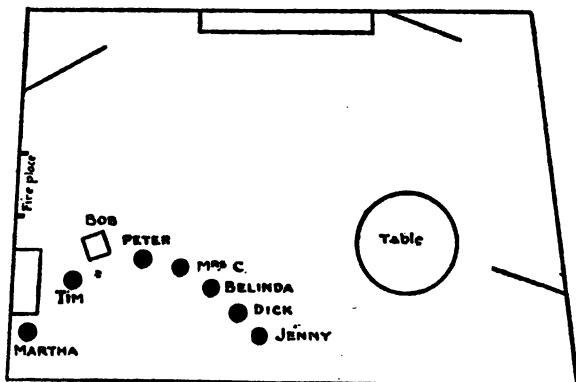
Bob. Now, draw round my dears, draw round in a circle or half a one I should say, and . . .

[All draw up chairs R.

Stirring hard at jug.

Belinda fetches custard cup and two teacups.

Bob serves out the punch in two tumblers, a custard cup, and two teacups.



*Mrs. Cratchit and
Martha tumblers.
Peter and Belinda
custard cup.
Bob and Tim one
cup.
Dick and Jenny
second cup.*

*Bob nervously signs
to her to stop.*

*Belinda nods
approvingly at each
word.*

Very gravely.

*Very crossly; Peter
makes a face of
extreme disgust.*

Dully.

Bob. I'll (*continuing*) give you—a toast—Mr. Scrooge—I'll give, give you, Mr. Scrooge—the founder of the feast.

[*BELINDA and Mrs. C. groan, all the children look dismally at their glasses.*

Mrs. C. The founder of the feast indeed! I wish I had him here! I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

Bob. My dear—the children—Christmas day.

Mrs. C. It should be Christmas Day I am sure on which one drinks the health of such an odious—stingy—hard—unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert. Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow.

[*Leaning forward to pat his hand.*

Bob. (*Laying his hand on hers*) My dear—my dear—Christmas Day.

Mrs. C. (*With a little toss of her head*) Oh, I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's then, not for his. (*Takes a little jerky sip*). Long life to him—A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! He'll be very merry (*sips*) and very happy (*sips*) I have no doubt.

All. Mr. Scrooge—Mr. Scrooge—Mr. Scrooge.

[*Sipping and passing glasses.*

Tim. (*Quite unconsciously in a very* cheerful tone, clear and high*) Long life to Mr. Scrooge.

All laugh.